

FEATURES FROM LIFE;

OR,

Her Diary

A SUMMER VISIT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

GEORGE BATEMAN, AND MARIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO MRS. HASTINGS.

Madam,

WITH splendor and elegance of taste we connect the idea of a lively imagination and a sensible heart ; it is to these last qualities I apply when I solicit the honor of your patronage for these volumes. The weaknesses and sufferings of the leading characters they exhibit, appear to me to rise naturally out of dispositions replete with great virtues and extreme tenderness ;

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their

their misfortunes above all others the most likely to make a deep and eternal impression on minds of fine-wrought sensibility. If this little work should meet with your approbation, I shall receive much pleasure, and feel my self-love greatly flattered.

I have the honor to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient

Humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

FEATURES FROM LIFE;

OR,

A SUMMER VISIT.

C H A P. I.

“**H**OW charmingly the thunder storm
“ has cleared the air and allayed the extreme
“ heat ; and see how beautifully the soft rays
“ of the setting sun gleam upon that little sta-
“ tue !” said Matilda to Mr. Conway, as
they entered their elegant little saloon ; “ Do
“ not direct my attention,” returned he, “ to
“ that object, lest it should tempt me to an act
“ of imprudence. I had a letter to day from
A 3 “ my



“ my friend Lewis, who informs me that the
“ original, from which this cast was taken,
“ is to be sold for only three hundred gui-
“ neas.” “ Would that fate,” cried Ma-
tilda, “ would exchange our hundreds for as
“ many thousands a year, that it might not
“ be imprudent in us to think the sum you
“ mention a trifle.”

“ Heavens ! my good girl, you do not
“ think that I had a serious thought about
“ the matter ! I know it is a thing impracti-
“ cable : I spoke but in jest : I hope, nay, I
“ trust, I have entirely lost the desire of
“ throwing away money in purchasing things
“ of no real utility.” “ I wish,” replied
Matilda, with a look of animated sweetness
that went to the heart, “ that it was in your
“ power to throw away money, as you call
“ it ; for I am sure there is no one who would
“ dispense superfluous cash more laudably,
“ or after more elegant acquisitions.”

“ O ! you simple girl, you must not thus
“ flatter such a favourite propensity, unless
“ you had the means of gratifying it ; for
“ you

“ you may increase it to a fault ; and in our
“ present circumstances you should rather bid
“ me to conquer it.”

“ Alas !” said Matilda, “ it is not in my
“ power to reserve”——

“ I know it is not ;” interrupted he, “ but
“ do not, Matilda, think me so absolute a
“ cognoscenti as to be seriously hurt at this
“ affair. Could you believe, that even if you
“ had by an admirable œconomy saved some-
“ thing from the sum appropriated to family
“ expences, that I would accept it towards
“ gratifying a whim of mine ; Oh no.”

“ You interrupted me before you had
“ heard me out, Conway,” said she. Now
“ if you have ended, permit me to finish
“ what I began to say.—I observed it was not
“ in my power to reserve, and I was going
“ to add the monosyllable *much*, if you had
“ suffered me to proceed. I have, however,
“ at this time, the sum you want, and it is
“ entirely at your service.”

“ And have you, indeed, done this ; and
“ yet, without the appearance of retrenching
“ in the smallest article ? I did not think,
“ when you several times wanted me to
“ hear about an overplus of cash in your
“ hands, from the manner in which our ta-
“ ble is supplied, that the charming mistress
“ who graced it could have such a sum in
“ bank.”

“ Yes, yes, I have ; and I beg of you to
“ take it without saying any more on the
“ subject.”

“ Oh ! no, I cannot accept of it ; expend
“ it yourself ; you may find a thousand pur-
“ poses for it : make an addition to your jew-
“ els ; that is the only sort of finery you
“ like.”

“ It is true,” said she ; “ but be assured
“ I shall not purchase any with this sum ; so,
“ I beg you will not think of refusing to
“ make use of it.”

“ I cannot

"I cannot help observing how strangely
 "it happens that you should have laid up
 "just the value of my little favourite. But
 "was it really the three hundred guineas?
 "——within twenty or thirty pounds."——

"Extraordinary! but you surely could
 "not think I would accept of it to spend my-
 "self, unless indeed you have as particular
 "a wish to make the purchase as I have?
 "I know no one who has a better taste than
 "yourself: but I do not recollect your ever
 "expressing any strong marks of admiration
 "of this statue. If you had any peculiar de-
 "fire yourself, the thing would be quite dif-
 "ferent."

"But, I have as great a wish to make the
 "purchase as you have: and so be content
 "on that head," said Matilda, starting from
 "her chair, and going towards the door—"I
 "will fetch the notes for you this minute."

"But are you certain it is your own de-
 "fire?—"Yes, quite certain," said Matilda,
 "going out at the door.

Charming woman ! she knew that to preserve a lively interest in the heart, it is sometimes necessary indulgently to sacrifice our own, perhaps, more prudent inclinations to its innocent foibles.

The energy with which Matilda uttered the words "Yes, quite certain," set the mind of Conway at ease. He took a turn across the room ; and whilst he admired a new and elegant object that had occasioned the conversation, he fully reconciled himself to the indulgence of his own inclination, by flattering himself he was about to gratify that of another. We often see the best kind of people in the world practising this mode of agreeable deceit upon themselves ; what they like they are willing to believe, and they flatter themselves, that a ready assent to their inclination does not arise merely from an obliging compliance with their taste or pleasurable pursuits, but from a similar wish in the person who complies. Matilda returned in a few minutes with her writing box in one hand, and the notes in the other. "Here are materials for writing, said she ;
" I insist

“ I insist that you write immediately for the
“ statue to be bought for you.”

He smiled upon her with a look of enthusiastic tenderness, and took the pen from her hand ; at that moment there came in Frederick, his eldest boy, beautiful as an angel, and holding in his hand a violin which (having always betrayed a partiality for musical sounds,) had been given to him for a plaything. The pen fell from the hands of Conway ; he flung the notes into the lap of Matilda, caught the sweet child in his arms ; “ take back your little treasure, my lovely, “ my too-indulgent girl,” said he. “ Why “ should I expend money in purchasing a “ sculptured resemblance of the God, when “ I have a young Apollo glowing with life, “ health, and beauty ; charming as the “ imagination of the poet, or the hand of “ sculpture ever formed ?”

The tender mother smiled at the compliment to her little darling, whilst her heart exulted at this triumph of paternal affection, over an inclination which was just going to
lead

lead to an improvident action. The little fellow felt the full force of the tender pressure which accompanied his father's compliment ; he clung about his neck, and imprinted a thousand affectionate kisses on his cheek ; but, in an instant, some new idea seized his volatile fancy ; he eagerly slid from his embrace, and ran out of the room.

“ See,” said Conway, with a smile of praiseful love, “ see, by what a mere accident I was preserved from listening to your seductive wiles and acting imprudently. “ Confess” continued he, with an air of ironical reproach, “ that you are—

“ Well,” cried she, interrupting him, “ perhaps it might not be quite right ; but “ I cannot bear that your generosity, opposed “ to my father's avarice, should abridge so “ many of your innocent pleasures.” Conway could make no answer, but by holding her affectionately to his heart, whilst the tears of grateful pleasure started to his eyes, and added softness to every line of a countenance

nance where sensibility and dignity were blended.

✓ Nature beheld the graceful weaknesses of these her favourite children through tears of delight: even prudence, who had prepared a little reproof, now found her voice cherished by rising emotion, and hid her softened features on the bosom of nature.

C H A P. II.

“**M**ATILDA,” exclaimed Conway,
“ I want words to express my feelings, but
“ my whole heart worships your virtues; yet,
“ you must forgive me, when I confess that
“ I do not even to others, so often as you
“ deserve them, make eulogiums on your
“ actions. It sometimes happens that in en-
“ deavouring to avoid a fault we run into
“ the contrary extreme. I have ever had a
“ peculiar disgust to a kind of false grati-
“ tude which people often impose upon the
“ world, and frequently, I believe, upon
“ themselves for the true. It discovers itself
“ in unseasonable and ostentatious enumerati-
“ ons of the affection, zeal, and services, of
“ their friends. In many instances it is on-
“ ly

“ly a medium through which they seek to
“impress their auditors with high ideas of
“their own excellence, by displaying their
“power of attaching objects so worthy of es-
“timation, as those are whom they take
“such elaborate pains to praise.”

“I entirely,” said she, “enter into your
“sentiment; that passage in Prior’s Henry
“and Emma has always appeared to me
“to possess a peculiar delicacy of thought,
“when Emma exclaims to Henry,”

And whilst with secret joy and inward pride,
Which from the world my careful soul shall hide,
I see thee Lord and end of my desire,
Exalted high as virtue can require.

“That passage of Prior has great beauty;
“nor do I recollect any author who has ex-
“pressed the thought with so much clearness
“and grace. How often, my Matilda, do
“I wish it was in my power to exalt you as
“high as your virtues deserve! It is then
“only that I repine at the narrowness of my
“fortunes—there is not any thing I would
“not do to add to your happiness.”

Oh!

“ Oh ! do not wish me an increase of hap-
 “ piness ; but rather join with me in wish-
 “ ing that what I now enjoy may be conti-
 “ nued to me. Conway, I sometimes think
 “ we are too happy ! ever since I have been
 “ capable of reflection, I have had an im-
 “ pression on my mind, that when two per-
 “ sons of ardent feelings and lively imagina-
 “ tions unite, some sad and weighty calami-
 “ ty generally follows to give a balance to
 “ their lot, which would otherwise prepon-
 “ derate too much on the side of happiness,
 “ for beings born to look on this state of ex-
 “ istence as only a passage to another. De-
 “ sire, preference, affection, are common
 “ to all ; but, the electric fire of true passion
 “ which now animates with delight, now
 “ desolates with despair the human soul, few
 “ hearts are formed to receive ; it is a gift
 “ like true genius, or true beauty, but sel-
 “ dom bestowed ; and like those, when
 “ given, is oftener a source of misery than
 “ of happiness.”

The solemnity with which she spoke af-
 fected Conway at the moment ; but he as-
 sumed

sumed an air of sprightliness, and replied:
“Come, come, my dear girl, we must not
“talk of felicity till we grow unhappy: you
“must chase this gloomy impression from
“your mind: I do not like your philoso-
“phy: it is too melancholy.”

Just then their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant who delivered a letter to Mr. Conway.

“From Sir Harry Gaythorne,” cried Matilda, hastily glancing her eyes over the superscription, “and contains an account of
“his marriage I dare say.”

“It has most probably taken place by this
“time,” said Conway, whilst he broke the seal, and immediately began to read. “‘This
“day has made me one of the happiest of the
“sons of men: this day has united me to one
“of the most charming women in the world.”

“Still yourself, Sir Harry,” exclaimed Matilda in the midst of joy; “you have
“not



“ not lost sight of that sentiment of politeness
“ which instructs us to avoid wounding the
“ feelings of others, even in trifles as well
“ as in more essential matters.

“ Your expressions, One of the happiest
“ of the sons of men ! One of the most
“ charming women in the world ! prove you
“ did not forget that you were writing to a
“ married friend. Sir Harry's conduct forms
“ one exception at least, to the remark of a
“ spirited and elegant writer, “ that it is the
“ characteristic of felicity to be unfeeling.”

“ When I write,” said Conway, “ I will
“ pen your eulogium for my friend ;—but
“ now hear the request he makes to you.—
“ It is the earnest request of lady Gaythorne
“ and myself, that you and Mrs. Conway
“ will spend the first winter with us in town :
“ and we will have the happiness of spend-
“ ing part of the summer with you in the
“ country. Lady Gaythorne has formed the
“ most exalted ideas of the excellence of Mrs.
“ Conway's character from the description
“ of your friend, and is impatient to become
“ acquainted

“acquainted with so charming a model of
“every domestic virtue.”—There! surely
“you cannot resist this? Come, what answer
“shall I write to him?”

“I sincerely hope nothing will happen to
“prevent your having the pleasure of con-
“gratulating your friend in person on his
“marriage.”—“How evasive a reply is
“that!” said Conway: “but I confess,
“I expected it; the little air of discontent
“that clouded your features when I read the
“invitation, told me you did not wish to go
“as plainly as if you had uttered the words;
“and were I not certain that your disincli-
“nation sprung from the best motive in
“the world, your care of your children,
“I should be exceedingly hurt at it. That
“motive, however, may be obviated, as
“you have a friend in whom you can repose
“so full a confidence.”

“It is true, I could; if you wish it, I
“will leave my children to the care of Mrs.
“Bates; but I confess I should not be so
“happy as if I had them under my eye.

“Dissipation.

“ Dissipation under such circumstances
“ would be doubly irksome ; for even when
“ I trod the giddy round of pleasure, before
“ I had taken on me the important cares of
“ a married life, the solidity of my education
“ on left a sensation on my mind, that often
“ reproached me for so unprofitably
“ spending my time ; and often amid the
“ glitter of fashionable amusements, I have
“ beheld the venerable form of my admirable
“ Mentor, sister Frances, beckon me to
“ retreat, reminding me of the studious,
“ the elegant hours I spent in the convent
“ of——”

“ My dear girl,” said Conway, “ I shall
“ presently begin to fancy you possess the
“ extraordinary powers ascribed to the high-
“ land seers. You prophesied once before,
“ and now you talk of the gift of the second
“ sight. But however I may be convinced
“ of the goodness of your intentions in declining
“ this visit, I am afraid Sir Harry and
“ Lady Gaythorne will take it unkindly.
“ You should remember, that a virtue carried
“ to an excess, degenerates into a fault.”

“ But

“ But surely,” said Matilda, “ ’tis my du-
 “ ty to”——“ Yet,” interrupted Conway,
 “ we should not let the practice of one vir-
 “ tue supersede the performance of another.
 “ I think you would be acting meritoriously
 “ in visiting this young woman: your ex-
 “ ample would be of great advantage to her.
 “ The change in her situation is a very great
 “ one: she is but just released from the prac-
 “ tice of a plan of rigid œconomy adopted
 “ by her mother, to enable them to make a
 “ genteel appearance from an income other-
 “ wise insufficient to support them in that
 “ respectable rank of life in which they were
 “ born. By her marriage with Sir Harry
 “ she is raised to rank and affluence: the
 “ youthful mind bounding from restraint,
 “ too often takes an irregular direction. Be
 “ it yours at least to endeavour to counteract
 “ the effects of those glaring blandishments
 “ by which fashion and extravagance so
 “ often seduce a young mind, suddenly
 “ raised to grandeur, into the vortex of fol-
 “ ly and dissipation. Go, my Matilda;
 “ let her see how gracefully the sober tints of
 “ domestic virtue may be blended with the
 “ light

“light and animated colouring of polished
 “wit and fashionable elegance.”

Matilda returned a bow and a smile for this compliment. But ah! how different from the grimace of ceremony, or the exulting smile of gratified vanity! It was the sweet smile of affectionate gratitude, and the lovely animation of conscious worth. The flexibility of Matilda's nature would have tempted her to have given up the point rather than to have contended with Conway; but she thought herself in the right, and strove against the impulse of her feelings, which in this case she deemed a weakness, as strongly as many a turbulent spirited lady has been obliged to combat with an intemperate tongue, in order to maintain her reputation for high breeding. But, to return to the conversation; “You are far more partial to my little merits than they deserve,” said Matilda: “I think that a positive duty
 “is not to be neglected in order to attempt
 “to perform a good action, which however
 “beneficial in its consequences, we are uncertain of achieving. I know that I can
 “be

“be of service to my children by staying at
“home; and I am sure if Lady Gaythorne
“need a pattern of right conduct, she will
“find examples even in the great world,
“more likely to awaken her attention, and
“influence her actions, than so imperfect a
“one as mine could do.”

“Do not exert yourself to argue farther
“on the subject, Matilda,” said Conway
with an air of reserve; “you know I never
“yet suffered you to comply with a request
“of mine when I could not convince you
“that it was right. Say no more about it;
“I have done with it;” and so saying, he
took up his hat and quitted the room.
The tone of his voice was not in the least
raised above his ordinary speech; but there
was a little haughtiness in the elevation of his
neck which Matilda had often remarked as
majestic dignity itself, but which she now
viewed with concern, as it convinced her he
was displeased.

Matilda thought it best not to say any thing
more on the subject that evening, but to let
the

the matter rest till the little displeasure Conway seemed to feel had subsided. She accordingly, when he returned into the house, began with the most pleasant cast of countenance she could assume, a different conversation ; and he, probably tired of their late subject, though not resolved to give up the point, was not at all displeased with a cessation of their contention for the present.

C H A P. III.

THE next morning, immediately after breakfast, Conway went out of the parlour, and passing into the garden, said to a servant that he met, "If a person of the name of Barton, from Greenwood Farm, should call, let him be sent to me——" "I am going to walk in the shrubbery." Matilda, in a meditating humour, sat down to her needlework;—she wished she had not said so much the evening before; or that her rhetoric had been more prevalent. Thus reflecting, she sat for about a quarter of an hour, when determining, either by more persuasive arguments to endeavour to bring him to her opinion, or to yield gracefully to his, as she saw occasion, she put aside her work and walked into the garden. She had reached that part of the shrubbery where Conway

B

was;

was ; the spreading branches of a laurel tree screened her from his sight, when a man, whom she knew not, approached the spot :—Matilda then recollected the orders which he had given on quitting the room ; and supposing the stranger came on business, she would not interrupt them, therefore, still shaded from their sight, she seated herself upon a garden chair to wait till the person should depart. Through the leafy coverture, however, she could plainly discern their gestures ; even the expression of their countenances.—The man a plain well looking farmer, approached with somewhat of that timid, irresolute air which poverty, superadded to affliction, generally gives.—Conway returned his bow with great affability.

“ I sent for you, Mr. Barton,” said Conway, “ in order to”—“ I apprehend so, “ Sir,” said the man, answering to what he imagined the other was about to say ;—“ I “ am very sorry that I have not been able “ to be as regular in paying my rent as usual, and as I am sure I hoped always to “ have done, but I had a bad getting in last “ harvest,

“ harvest, for my wheat was mildewed before I could carry it off the field, so it sold at a great loss, Sir; and as my turnips did not do well neither, my cattle have been sadly pinched, and I have lost a good many. But my crop on the ground, thank God, looks promising, and I will thresh out enough as soon as ever I get it into the barn, to pay what I should have paid at Midsummer; so I hope, Sir.”

“ Say no more by way of apology, Mr. Barton,” said Conway interrupting him in his turn, “ as you have been accustomed to make your payments regularly, I should not have sent to you on that account; I had another reason for requesting you to call upon me—I want to know whether your father did not possess an estate called Elm wood Farm, in the county of——; can you recollect ever having heard him mention any thing concerning its falling into the possession of Mr. Johnstone?”

“I was too young,” replied Barton, when
“my father died to have been told the par-
“culars, but I remember to have heard him
“say that estate belonged once to my grand-
“father ; and that was he himself a man
“possessed of property sufficient to enter in-
“to a lawsuit, without fear of hurting his
“family, should he lose his cause, he would
“try to get it out of the hands of an attor-
“ney, who had unjustly got it into his posse-
“sion.”

“To this Mr. Johnstone, replied Conway,
“I was distantly related by my mother’s
“side ; and, at his death, this estate devol-
“ved to me as his heir at law, but on look-
“ing over some papers, I find many reasons
“to believe if you were to commence a suit
“against me, you might make out a better
“title to it than I can.”

A ray of hope and pleasurable surprize ani-
mated the poor man’s aspect for a moment,
but quickly disappeared.—“Alas ! Sir,” said
he, “do not talk of law ;—I have no money
“to go to law with.”—“I have no doubt”
said

said Conway, "of your gaining your cause;—
"and as I believe you to be an honest man,
"I will lend you money, and you may re-
"pay me as soon as you have it in your
"power."

An offer made with so much apparent sincerity, so unexpected, and so uncommon, almost overwhelmed the poor man, whose health had been greatly impaired by distress of mind. Matilda saw his change of countenance, and an expression of compassionate concern discovered her to Conway. Barton, recovering himself, attempted to express his gratitude.

"I only render you justice, Mr. Barton," said Conway, waving his thanks.—Think
"over this matter in your own mind and
"if you will let me see you to-morrow morn-
"ing at ten o'clock, we will then talk farther on the subject, and I will give you the
"best advice I can how you ought to proceed.

"I would thank you, Sir," said Barton,
"if I could, but I have not words—I am all

“amazement.—What, Sir ! not only tell a
“poor needy man where he may find a trea-
“sure, but put a spade in his hands to dig
“it up, to your own detriment !—Good
“God ! I did not think there had been
“such goodness, such nobleness in the world
“as this !” He bowed respectfully and re-
tired.

“Alas !” said Conway, turning to Matil-
“da, depraved indeed must the age be, when
“even to an honest man an act of justice,
“in the least degree out of the common road,
“appears like an act of generosity.”

“It is true,” said Matilda, taking his hand
with an air of affectionate reverence, “your
“voluntary avowal to the man, that you
“have reason to think yourself not the lawful
“owner of the estate, is only acting with
“strict integrity; but your offer to supply him
“with money, certainly entitles you to the
“praise due to a generous action.

“I do not know,” replied Conway, whe-
“ther it would not have been a want of cha-
“rity



“ rity not to have lent him money.—I do
 “ him a material service, and I am in no
 “ danger of hurting myself.”

“ But why did you conceal from me your
 “ intention ?” said Matilda ; “ if I have
 “ not your strength of understanding, I have
 “ I trust, a kindred rectitude of principle.”

“ I did not doubt, Matilda, your ready
 “ concurrence in my intention, and I was
 “ about to communicate it to you yesterday,
 “ but the arrival of Sir Harry Gaythorne’s
 “ letter, and our subsequent conversation,
 “ prevented me.”

“ But why, my dear Conway, should this
 “ poor man who is now in distress, wait the
 “ tardy process of the law, if you are convin-
 “ ced he has a right to the estate.”

“ It appears to me that he has,” said Con-
 way ; “ but I would have it proved so to
 “ others.—You know, my good Matilda,
 “ that even should your father leave us all
 “ that we have a right to expect, which,
 B 4 “ considering

“ considering his disposition, is not probable ;
“ the fortunes of our children will not be
“ large ; and the comforts of life are few—
“ the sorrows many, we have no right to less—
“ sen, in the smallest degree, any one’s portion of the gifts of fortune ; even though
“ we took only from his abundance to give
“ to one whose allotment was too scanty for
“ his necessities : for it is probable, how partial soever the distribution may appear,
“ that this unequal possession of one
“ good, may be counterbalanced by the total deprivation of some other. Therefore
“ I would not willingly be reproached, nor
“ would I have to reproach myself with having,
“ ing, through what may be called a romantic idea of justice, given away ever so small
“ a portion of our children’s birth-right.

“ A child of your’s reproach you ?” said Matilda, kindling at the thought, “ it can never happen.—The child who does not glory in such a father, should it possess the fascinating powers of a siren, I would tear from my heart.”

“ I thank

"I thank you, my good girl;—I thank
 "you," returned Conway, much affected,
 "but had we not better walk towards the
 "house?"

They turned to go in. In their walk Conway revived the subject of their friend's marriage; but took care by no direct word whatever, to request that she would go to town. The affectionate reverence with which the incident just recorded, had filled Matilda's breast, robbed her of the power of contending, but she wished him to give her an opportunity of shewing him she yielded to his solicitations; and though he did not again, in direct terms, repeat his request, she could plainly enough discover it was the wish of his heart that she should comply with it, by his using, in the course of their conversation, the oblique expression "*as you have determined not to go to town.*"

Matilda, despairing of a more open utterance of his desire, stopped, turned round, and putting her hand in his, answered by a look,

—“ I have *not* so determined ; lead me where
“ you will.”

You will go then !” said Conway. “—Do
I read right ?

“ I purpose it,” returned Matilda.

“ How much may be said” cried Conway, “ without the articulation of a word ?”

“ Yes,” replied Matilda, “ it has often
“ struck me, that the language of the tongue
“ was only designed by nature for the negotiation of business ; for things affectionate,
“ smoothing, or witty, may be said by the
“ eyes much more forcibly.”

“ One might indeed justly infer so, Matilda,” said Conway, smiling at this little fallacy, “ had nature given to every one
“ eyes as expressive as yours.”

C H A P. IV.

CONWAY had not finished speaking two minutes, before a servant approached, and told them their little Charles mentioned before was taken ill. Matilda's countenance instantly evinced the truth of Conway's late assertion; the strongest expression of maternal anxiety overspread her features whilst she flew to the house without uttering a single word. She was too much alarmed for inquiry. Conway followed with feelings not less acute. They beheld their child extended on the knees of a female attendant; the beautiful bloom of his complexion was changed to a livid blackness. His limbs were distorted by convulsive spasms; every vein was swelled beyond its natural size, and his features were made hideous by contorsion. Such was now that lovely infant, whom so recently his
found

fond father had held to his heart, exultingly exclaiming, that his little frame, glowing with life, health, and beauty, exhibited a more striking resemblance of an infant Apollo than the imagination of the poet, or the hand of the sculptor ever formed !—Matilda, springing hastily forward, took the child and laid it on her lap ; and whilst her head bent over it, the big drops of sorrow rolled from her cheek on its livid forehead. “ Go instantly,” said Conway to one of the women, “ tell Philip to fetch Dr. J——.”

His mandate was instantly obeyed.

As Conway held the little convulsed hand of the poor infant in his, his heart smote him with having too importunately solicited the tender, anxious mother to quit her children, In the deep anguish of her heart, Matilda was ready to exclaim, “ Ah, see what constant care, what unwearied attention these little beings demand !”—But she checked herself on casting her eyes on Conway’s face, which appeared the picture of grief :

grief:—“No, not even in the extremity of
“my own woe, will I add to his affliction!”

Dr. J—— arrived as speedily as the distance would admit, but only arrived to dispel all hopes of the child’s recovery, who, according to his prediction, expired before another day dawned.

The parent’s heart, formed in nature’s roughest mold, and the soul of exquisite sensibility, will here mutually sympathize; for such is the selfishness of human nature, that even the greedy, unfeeling heir, whose heart bounded at hearing of his father’s death;—who saw, without a sigh, a venerable and affectionate mother, brought by his vice and folly with sorrow to the grave;—who can behold a tender wife, the victim of his cruelty, expiring by slow but sure degrees, without remorse, has yet wept in bitter anguish; has melted even to infantine weakness at losing a child, a living resemblance of himself.

C H A P. V.

THIS calamitous incident retarded, as will naturally be supposed, their journey, till winter had nearly given place to spring. Matilda would far rather still have indulged her melancoly in the country ; but Conway, who thought the change of objects might give a new turn to her spirits, united his own to the pressing intreaties of Sir Harry and Lady G——, that she would spend a few weeks in Grosvenor-Square, as they had promised to spend part of the summer with Mr. and Mrs. Conway in the country. The news-papers had already announced to them that Lady Gaythorne had deposed the sovereign of former winters, and now reigned sole empress of the wide and brilliant provinces of taste ; that the dress in which she was presented at court, had been a model
for

for the fashionable world ever since ; that Gaythorne hats, Gaythorne caps, and Gaythorne trimmings, were the high rage of the day. Her name never appeared in the public prints, but preceded by the epithets of lovely, elegant, enchanting, &c. &c.

These circumstances joined to the high opinion they had of Sir Harry's taste and judgment, led them to conclude that lady Gaythorne was at least, a pretty or a fine woman. As to her being a perfect beauty, they made due allowances for the exaggeration of fame, who seldom discriminates sufficiently amidst the splendor of high rank, and the trappings of fantastic finery, to make a correct portrait. But as some years had elapsed since the Conways had mixed much in the gay world, their eyes long accustomed to the natural beauty and simple neatness of the provincial ladies, could see no charms in the gaudy substitutes of art, and consequently the person and attire of Lady Gaythorne had few attractions in their sight. But as I hope to have the honour of being read by some of those whose habits of thinking were early
formed

formed in the great world, and never afterwards spoiled by seclusion from it, I shall for their amusement embellish my work with as accurate a likeness of the lady now in question as my pencil is capable of delineating.

The precise age of Lady Gaythorne, I find impossible to ascertain : several persons who were intimate with her parents at the time of her birth, confidently declared she had seen her six and twentieth birth day before the period at which these memoirs commence. But this evidence there is, I grant, some cause to doubt, as the person most nearly concerned in the affair, Lady Gaythorne herself, always averred she was no more than eighteen ; and we are credibly informed, as a corroborative circumstance, that her ladyship's mother when speaking of her, even after her marriage, constantly used the epithet of young girl, or young thing. But as I pique myself on a strict impartiality, which is certainly one of the most material characteristics of a good historian, I cannot refrain from inserting a thought which has this instant struck

struck me, though it may in some degree weaken the force of the last fact.

The learned and ingenious author of the essay on antient virgins having gallantly declared it his open opinion, that the æra of old maidhood does not commence till the age of forty three: I think, and Lady Gaythorne's mother it is probable had the same idea, that according to this calculation the period of girlhood may be fairly extended beyond the age of twenty-six; and that of boyhood too. Nor do I doubt having on my side in support of this sentiment, those two able advocates, the witty, and eloquent Mr. Fox, and his brilliant friend Mr. Sheridan: grounding my reliance on their having so often in their animated and classical orations stiled our wise young minister a boy, after as I apprehend, he had passed that age.

But to the portrait.

Lady Gaythorne was tall, and thin even to leanness; her features were regular, but not one of them had the least pretensions to
be

be called handsome, (except her eyes which were well shaped and of a fine blue,) nor was the want of beauty made up by the charms of an engaging aspect : an insolent pride being the prevailing expression of her countenance, except when to serve any particular purpose she clothed it in the wily smiles of allurements or dissimulation.

By leading the fashions however, she found out a remedy for almost every defect : the hollowness of her cheeks, and the fallowness of her complexion, she rectified by a liberal use of the best fard and rouge : and she continued to take from the length of her visage by having her hair dressed full round her face and low down upon her forehead, so as to hide a considerable part of it.

The meagerness of her neck was concealed by an artful arrangement of flowing curls ; and the deficiency of a rising chest, aptly apologised for by an immense protuberance of gauze, lace, or muslin, supported by wire, catgut, &c. &c. The extraordinary length and flatness of her arms from the shoulder to
the

the elbow, she concealed by a large full sleeve tied with bunches of ribbands; and to increase the beauty of that part of her arm, which the custom of this country authorises every lady to shew undraped, a pair of black velvet bracelets encircled her wrists, which by making them look smaller gave somewhat more the appearance of a gradual swell to the upper part of her arm. Her feet which nature had a little unkindly formed rather large and flat, were according to the French fashion pinched into a pair of shoes, the soles of which scarcely exceeded the breadth of half a crown piece; but by this ardent compression the instep was forced to a greater height, and the defect of nature by that means happily atoned for.

But, there is yet another exquisite stroke of her ladyship's art that remains to be recorded, and which I beg pardon for not inserting in its relative situation. The skilful statuary by a judicious use of the chissel, can, when he has formed the shoulders of a female figure too high, easily reduce them to the line of beauty: but though a woman of fashion

en

on when blest with a happy genius, can as (I think I have shown) do much to increase the elegance of her own form, of a reduction similar to that in the sculptor's power, there is I believe, at present no precedent.

It only remained therefore for lady Gaythorne to revive the Elizabeth Ruff, and introduce the immense handkerchief; and thus from a refinement of art, if she could not give her own form the symmetry she, desired, she amply compensated for the want of it in herself, by introducing a fashion which rendered it of no effect in others. For let a statue of Theseus, or Æsop, and the Venus de Medicis, be habited in the Gaythorne mode, and they would appear equally graceful. Having resided from her childhood at St. Omers, she had acquired that free familiar air which distinguishes the French provincial ladies; but without their wit and engaging vivacity. She spoke the English tongue fluently, though with a foreign accent: this last circumstance was however, by no means a disadvantage to her; it gave a certain childishness to her articulation which affected the

the ear like the tones of simplicity ; and with co-operating with a soft flexible voice, served in some degree to meliorate the strong lines of art which appeared in her person and manners.

C H A P. VI.

IT was between the hours of seven and eight in the evening when Conway and Matilda arrived at the elegant mansion of Sir Harry Gaythorne. At the door of the apartment to which they were shewn, they were met by Sir Harry, who with a countenance beaming with pleasure, led them to Lady Gaythorne.

“ Our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Conway.”

Lady Gaythorne uttering every expression the vocabulary of good breeding furnishes for such occasions, after having returned the bows of Mr. Conway, took the hand of Matilda and led her to a sofa at the upper end
of

of the room. Sir Harry and Conway again seized the hands of each other, repeating expressions of joy at this meeting, with a warmth that delighted Matilda, who instantly turned her eyes towards Lady Gaythorne, expecting to find her employed, and equally charmed with herself in contemplating the looks of friendly affection which animated the countenances of both. But her Ladyship was much more importantly engaged than in tracing the lines which the gentle and generous affections of the soul impress on the aspect; for the ends depending from a knot of ribband on one of her sleeves were not of an equal length, and she was busied in adjusting this part of her drapery. Having completed it, she turned to Mrs. Conway and told her, "she had suffered a great deal from having been so long deprived of the happiness of seeing her and Mr. Conway; and thanked them both for the honour and happiness they gave her by their visit."

Mr. and Mrs. Conway were making the politest return to this compliment, when a thundering

thundering footman's rap shook the house with a violence that must totally have deranged her ladyship's nerves, had it proceeded from any other cause than that of announcing visitors. Of this we have not the least doubt, having been credibly informed, that though she never discovered the smallest emotion, but sat with the utmost fortitude during the last-mentioned noise, the heavy mechanical double-knock of the postman never failed making her start, complain of her nerves, and declare that the sound went quite through her brain, and put her whole frame in agitation for a quarter of an hour afterwards.

Sir Harry continued talking with his friend till the sound of feet and the rustling of silks on the staircase caused him to exclaim with surprise, turning to her ladyship—"Your
" orders have been neglected!—I request-
" ed this evening we might be denied to o-
" ther visitors; thinking after so long a jour-
" ney it would be more agreeable to Mr.
" and Mrs. Conway."—There was no opportunity

portunity for any answer from Lady Gaythorne ; but a look of displeasure which she had hardly time to chase from her features when the servant entered and announced—
“ Lady Wittington, and Mrs. Neville.”
Lady Gaythorne having paid her compliments with great respect to the former, vouchsafed a nod and courtesy to the latter. She placed Lady Wittington on the sofa beside Mrs. Conway, and Mrs. Neville sunk into the first unoccupied chair on which she cast her eye.

“ Did your Ladyship see Mara’s entrée
“ at the Opera ?”

“ Yes, and was enchanted ! What a
“ voice ! What brilliant execution !—But
“ I own I was vexed to hear her receive so
“ much applause : the insolent caprice of her
“ late conduct ought to have been punish-
“ ed by marks of neglect and contempt.”

“ Why wish it should be so ?” said Sir
Harry. “ I fear that the public in general
“ is too apt to delight in humbling the spirits

“ of persons of great superiority of talents,
“ who from want of fortune are dependant
“ on it for support and protection, whilst the
“ pride and arrogance of the rich and great
“ pass frequently unnoticed, always unpun-
“ ished.”

“ Oh ! because we have it not in our
“ power to punish them,” replied Lady Gay-
thorne.

“ Pardon me, we have it always in our
“ power to shew our disapprobation of their
“ conduct in the way just mentioned, by
“ marks of neglect and contempt. How
“ wide is the difference ! If in this age of fri-
“ volity and dissipation, a man or woman of
“ fashion condescends to cultivate the small-
“ est talent for arts, science, or literature,
“ their performances are extolled with rap-
“ ture; candid criticism is precluded, and the
“ arbitrary umpire, fashion, stamps their va-
“ lue. They meet, perhaps, with some few
“ instances of personal envy ; but this is am-
“ ply made amends for, by the unmixed
“ applause they receive from the many. On
“ the

“ the contrary, what is his lot who is neces-
 “ sitated to depend for the means of existence
 “ on even the sublimest efforts of Heaven
 “ born genius ? Why the supercilious, af-
 “ fected disregard of many who under-
 “ standing his excellence, want the soul to
 “ spread the worth they love ; and the ig-
 “ norant commentaries, and even the info-
 “ lent disdain of those who can neither un-
 “ derstand nor judge. It should seem, that
 “ we feel humbled to receive pleasure from
 “ our inferiors in birth and fortune, and
 “ take these methods of revenging ourselves
 “ for the superiority nature has given them
 “ over us.”

A little beam of pleasure lighted the pen-
 sive features of Mrs. Neville while he spoke.
 “ Most truly said, Sir Harry,” cried Lady
 Wittington ; “ you have spoken what my
 “ soul feels. It is a view of human nature,
 “ that almost makes one ashamed of being
 “ of the same species with individuals capa-
 “ ble of sentiments so illiberal.”

Lady Gaythorne either did not, or pretended not to pay the least attention to what Sir Harry had been saying ; and when Lady Wittington had ended, she turned to her with an air, whether real or fictitious, that implied she had been reflecting on a very important subject. “ Pray,” said she, “ did “ your Ladyship observe Mrs. W——’s hat, “ the night of Dido : was it steel or diamond “ that glittered so violently at a distance ?”

Sir Harry appeared mortified to the quick ; his eye-brows grew more elevated at her affected inattention to the conversation which had passed, and the hue of resentment shot swiftly into his cheeks ; but making an effort to suppress the emotion of anger, it died away, and his features settled into the languid look of disappointed hope.

Lady Wittington replied, “ she really “ could not determine ;” and just then Mr. Needham was announced.

C H A P. VII.

IN this gentleman's character there was something very singular ; it was a character little understood. He passed for a cynical observer and commentator on the follies of mankind ; whilst in reality, he made his way in the world by a consummate knowledge in the art of flattery. His father, who was for many years a merchant of great eminence, soon after young Needham had completed his studies at the University, died insolvent. Whilst he was in the agonies of surprise and affliction at this melancholy change in his affairs, a young gentleman who had lately succeeded to his paternal inheritance, and into whose friendship he had insinuated himself at College, gave him an

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asylum in his house, and settled upon him an annuity of a hundred pounds a year. Here he was introduced upon a footing of equality to the best company.

Happening, however, to give offence to the lady his friend, a few years after married, he was genteelly dismissed from the house, and though he still continued to visit there, it was plain he was not welcomed as an intimate friend. Accustomed to the indolent softnesses, and the brilliant amusements of high life, he knew not how to relinquish them, and he revolved a thousand schemes in his head for enabling a man possessed of a bare hundred pounds a year, to share in the voluptuous indulgences, the expensive pleasures of the affluent. He saw the thing done every day by those who had the faculty of applying themselves with address to the weaknesses, the vices, the caprices, of mankind.—And what he had seen of life had shewn to him, that the readiest way to the goal he aimed at was by the road of some species of adulation. He saw the beaten road of indiscriminating flattery so thronged, that
he

he feared he should be often jolted in his passage, and, perhaps, at last, totally overset by some of those who possessed more of the graces of manner than himself, which yet should eventually lead him to the same point: He determined to become a general censor, and a partial flatterer;—but imagine not, reader, his encomiums were confined to the rich and powerful: he found it his advantage sometimes to bestow them on person not distinguished by these advantages; and in this he was judicious, for it had to slight observers the appearance of disinterestedness, which, aided by the austerity with which he inveighed against the vices of the great world, made his praises more ardently coveted; and more highly estimated when obtained.

He had fathomed the depth of Lady Gaythorne's understanding; he knew the extent of Sir Harry's fortune, and played his cards accordingly. He had a sort of sarcastic wit, which entertained; and as it is not difficult to make our conversation admired on an ill-natured subject *without* this ingre-

dient, yet when it is intermixed, it grounds a reputation for the talent of shining in conversation that nothing can shake. For though some, through good nature, and others from a dread of being lashed in the same way, feel uneasy sensations; yet the far greater number of the auditors will be thorough admirers; for there is but a small part of the world who see their own characters clearly enough to think themselves objects for satiric animadversion; and of those who on such occasions feel for others, *very small indeed* is the number. Even those who, from a timidity of disposition, fear a satirist, will court him for the same reasons,—from a dread and a knowledge of his malignity; as the simple Indians worship the Devil, to court him not to sour their palm wine.

Sir Harry Gaythorne on the entrance of Mr. Needham, had crossed over to that side of the room on which Mrs. Neville sat, and began a conversation with her, by saying, “What do you think, Mrs. Neville of the new dance, *Il Convito di Pietro*?”

“I saw

“ I saw great part of it with admiration,”
returned she.

“ I thought it a subject worthy the con-
templation, and likely to strike the imagi-
nation of an historical painter, which made
me mention it.”

“ Oh, good Heavens!” returned she,
“ there is in the attitudes, the expression of
Lepicq, the boldness, the terrible graces
of Angelo, the abashed, the self-reproach-
ing humility;—the remorse struck airs,
which Guido knew to give in a few of
his pieces, beyond every other master.
I declare I know no modern professor of
any one of the imitative arts, who could
depict the passions with greater force or
justness than Lepicq.

“ Little Neville,” said Needham, with a
patronizing and sagacious air, “ you speak
very well as an artist, but though as such
you may be allowed to contemplate Il
Convito di Pietro with delight, the tongue
and the pen of the moralist should stigma-

" tise it as an exhibition that marks the pro-
 " fligacy of the age in colours most glaring.
 " And I have no doubt, if representations
 " of this kind continue to be encouraged,
 " but the Christian idea of future punish-
 " ments will convey as little horror as the
 " heathen notion of Tartarus; and the re-
 " cords of scripture be as familiarly ransack-
 " ed for materials for dramatic composition,
 " as have been the pages of mythological
 " story. Nor should I, I confess, be surpriz-
 " ed to see a pantomime announced, taken
 " from some passage in holy writ. The
 " Temptation, for instance,—and the As-
 " cent of Satan, bearing to the pinnacle of a
 " high rock the Saviour of the World, im-
 " mortalise some Harlequin of the present
 " day."

" Good God ! you are too severe, surely,
 " Mr. Needham," said Lady Wittington ;
 whilst looks of surprize and momentary awe
 passed over the countenance of all but Lady
 Gaythorne, who with an air of indifference
 replied, " I hate pantomimes ; I never stay
 " to see them ; the boxes are always empty
 " before

“ before they begin.”—“ True,” replied Sir Harry ; “ and I am inclined to think, bad
 “ as the age is, representations of that kind
 “ must for some time longer be confined to
 “ dances at the Opera ; for I much question
 “ whether, considering the higher class of
 “ people go out before the pantomime begins,
 “ there would at present be found a party
 “ strong enough to support them.”

“ Oh, Sir,” returned Needham, “ but
 “ spectacles of that kind would, I have no
 “ doubt, inspire a rage for the tricks of Har-
 “ lequin, and rivet our people of rank as
 “ firmly to their seats as ever did the graces
 “ of Veltris, or the majesty of Simonet ; for
 “ an appearance of irreligion can give con-
 “ sequence to the meanest objects, and
 “ throw an air of fashion over the vulgarest
 “ amusements.”

“ I should be afraid,” said Mr. Conway,
 smiling, “ that the taste of the age would
 “ be much against the revival of any thing
 “ like the long-exploded farces, called the
 “ Mysteries and Moralities—But if the idea
 “ of

“ of them were so far revived as to make
“ the Devil a character in modern farces, it
“ would have one good effect,—it would re-
“ concile us, in some degree, to the mon-
“ strous plots and unnatural incidents, so
“ much the dramatic fashion of the present
“ day ; as, in those ancient pieces, the Devil
“ was invariably the *plotter of all the mis-*
“ *chief.*”—Farther conversation on the sub-
ject was prevented by Sir Harry’s asking
Mrs. Neville, if she should exhibit at the
Royal Academy any of her paintings this
year ?

“ Only one piece,” she returned ;—the
“ subject is Minerva conducting a young
“ pupil to the temple of Science :—it was
“ begun at the request of Lady Wiltlington,
“ and the principal figure is a portrait of her
“ ladyship.”

“ Had Mrs. Neville’s talents been in the
“ Hogarthian stile,” said Needham, speak-
ing of Sir Harry in a key loud enough
for those who sat next him to hear, and yet
so whispered as to give the party in question
some

some colour for seeming not to hear ; “ and
“ she had designed to represent a wrinkled
“ hag, conducting a young pupil to a mo-
“ dern temple of Venus, I should have com-
“ mended her choice of a fitter.”

Mrs. Neville changed colour, and the rest who heard him looked absolutely terrified. But lady Wittington, with an admirable presence of mind, pretended to be too deeply engaged in conversation with Lady Gaythorne to apprehend they were talking of her. The attention Needham had paid to Mrs. Neville, had given that lady some sort of consequence with Lady Gaythorne, for she had looked once or twice towards her ; and that without any haughtiness in her aspect. Lady Wittington had, perhaps, perceived this, and thought it the favourable moment to propose the thing for which she had introduced her protégée to Lady Gaythorne ; —for she said, “ Mrs. Neville would think
“ herself much honoured if your Ladyship
“ would sit to her pencil for some historical
“ figure, as it will undoubtedly be a means
“ of bringing her talents into notice.”

“ Is

“ Is portrait painting her forte ? ”

“ She has great excellence in that way.”

“ And you tell me she has pieces every
“ year in the exhibition ?—Well, I will call
“ to-morrow morning and see her pictures ;
“ but does your Lady ship think there will be
“ time to finish a picture of me before the
“ Exhibition opens ?—for this is a material
“ point with me ; as I assure you my sole
“ motive in having one done is to serve your
“ friend.—Three of the first artists have my
“ portrait in hand at this time.”

Having accomplished, by this sacrifice to Lady Gaythorne's vanity, the point she aimed at, Lady Wiltlington told Mrs. Neville the honour Lady Gaythorne designed her ;—and after the customary forms had passed, Lady Wiltlington and Mrs. Neville withdrew.—They had scarcely left the room, when Needham launched into animadversions on the service it would be of to the fame of the paintress, to delineate a figure so distinguished for beauty as Lady Gaythorne's.

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The former part of Needham's conversation, though some of his ideas had a little startled her, had rather tended to prejudice Mrs. Conway in his favour; she thought many of his strictures well meant and striking, but his coarse manner of speaking of Lady Wittington had disgusted her a good deal; for from the interest she seemed to take in the success of Mrs. Neville's talents, she was inclined to think well of her head and heart: and therefore as she ever made it a point to speak all she could in favour of those she heard depreciated, she took occasion, when her ladyship had disappeared, to commend her zeal in the cause of the person whose abilities she patronised.

“All a farce, madam?” returned Needham, hastily;—“I have had opportunities of knowing Lady Wittington's character well, and she is sensible of it, which was the reason she would not seem to hear what I said.—Towards this very woman, whom she pretends to patronize, I know she has acted basely.—The fact is this:—Lady Wittington, ever since a certain affair

“fair

“ fair has been talked of, finding herself
“ but coldly received by many of her friends,
“ and the circle of her acquaintance likely
“ to diminish, prudently bethought of set-
“ ting up herself as a patroness of the pro-
“ fessors of arts and science ; and by the
“ liberality with which she spends her mo-
“ ney, and the *eclat* of a title, she con-
“ trives to bring about her a number of that
“ class of people ;—by this means she has
“ collected in her train of visiting acquain-
“ tance, perhaps, upon the whole, charac-
“ ters more respectable (though not so bril-
“ liant with respect to exterior splendour)
“ than those she formerly associated with ;
“ for, with the hope of meeting persons with
“ talents congenial to their own, many peo-
“ ple of rank who are distinguished for worth
“ and a love of elegant art and liberal sci-
“ ence, honour her parties with their pre-
“ sence.—And, by degrees, I dare say she
“ will again be received by every descripti-
“ on of persons who figure in the world of
“ fashion.—But to the immediate subject.—
“ Mrs. Neville was the daughter of one of
“ Lady Wittington’s tenants, a reputable
“ farmer

“ farmer in — shire:—the girl had been
“ educated at a country boarding school,
“ where she had been taught to draw by an
“ indifferent master who attended the board-
“ ers. Some sketches she had made were
“ accidentally shewn to Lady Wittington,
“ when she was in the country, and an
“ *amateur* of fashion who was then on a visit
“ to her ladyship, pronouncing them above
“ mediocrity, she thought a favourable oppor-
“ tunity presented itself for distinguishing her
“ love of art, and her philanthropic disposi-
“ tion at the same time, she accordingly
“ sent for the young woman, took her into
“ her house, and furnished her with proper
“ masters to finish her education; particu-
“ larly attending to that art she had shewn
“ the dawn of abilities to excel in. Here
“ she continued studiously endeavouring to
“ improve by the assistance offered, and
“ gave no cause of disgust, till a young man
“ of immense fortune, the nephew of Lady
“ Wittington, and to whom Lord Witting-
“ ton had been guardian, by coming fre-
“ quently to the house, appeared to have
“ conceived the strongest admiration of Miss
“ Markland’s

“ Markland’s charms, worth, and talents ;
“ and as her ladyship knew him to be ami-
“ able, and of that spirit which minds of her
“ ladyship’s cast are pleased to stile romanti-
“ cally generous, she feared he would offer ho-
“ nourable addresses to her protégée,—a cir-
“ cumstance she could not think of with pa-
“ tience, as his estate, in case of Mr. Man-
“ sel’s dying without an heir, Lord Wit-
“ lington had left to her ladyship.—She re-
“ monstrated with him in the strongest terms
“ against the dishonour he was about to
“ bring upon their family, by descending to
“ a plebeian alliance. She even added hints,
“ reflecting on the morals of Miss Mark-
“ land ; but Mr. Mansel saw the design she
“ aimed at, and they had no other effect on
“ his mind than to irritate him to say, he
“ thought a woman of worth, however low-
“ ly born, did more honour to a family than
“ one of illustrious birth, whose actions were
“ ignoble. This stroke, which she could
“ not but perceive was meant for herself,
“ fired Lady Wittington with so strong a
“ resentment, that she determined, at all
“ events, to gratify her pride, avarice, and
“ revenge

“ revenge by frustrating their union ; and
“ she instantly set every engine at work to
“ bring about her purpose. She knew Mr.
“ Mansel was going out of town the next
“ day, and she had drawn from his conver-
“ sation of this day that he had not yet made
“ a direct offer of his hand and fortune to
“ Miss Markland, and she contrived to en-
“ gage her so that he could have no oppor-
“ tunity of speaking to her alone that day.

“ As soon as he was gone she entered up-
“ on the subject she had been for some days
“ thinking of.

“ My dear Markland,” said her ladyship
“ with a tone of kindness, “ I have long
“ been thinking of some way of establishing
“ you in life, that may be a resource when
“ I shall be no more ; a period, which con-
“ sidering my ill state of health, may not
“ be far distant.—I have something to pro-
“ pose to you, which I hope will be approved
“ by you.”

“ The

“ The poor girl, with tears of gratitude
“ thanked her ladyship for her kind concern,
“ and said she was sure she could suggest no-
“ thing but what was for her best interest.
“ Lady Wittington then said she had heard
“ of a person who was remarkably clever at
“ embroidery, who wished to find a partner
“ who had a turn for flower painting—Now
“ as this appears to me, added her ladyship,
“ not an ineligible plan, if you approve it,
“ I will advance the few hundred pounds re-
“ quired, and you shall immediately enter
“ into business, and I can almost insure you
“ success, for I will recommend you to all
“ my friends.—The words ‘ enter into busi-
“ ness,’ struck Miss Markland to the heart ;
“ and whilst Lady Wittington was deliver-
“ ing this speech she felt as if undergoing a
“ sudden metamorphosis ;—to be thus in a
“ moment degraded from an historical paint-
“ er to a little pattern-drawer for an embroi-
“ derer, was too much !—she could not ar-
“ ticulate a syllable for some minutes ; at
“ last she burst into tears,—‘ What have you
“ to object, Miss Markland,’ said Lady
“ Wit-

“ Witlington,—‘ this is the first time I ever
“ perceived in you symptoms of ingratitude.’

“ ‘ Oh, madam !’ returned she, endea-
“ vouring to stifle her tears, ‘ I am not, I
“ will not be ungrateful—but I had flattered
“ myself—I had hoped—’

“ ‘ With what had you flattered yourself
“ —what had you hoped, Miss Markland ?’

“ ‘ I had hoped, encouraged by your praise,
“ es, and those of the friends you procured
“ me, that I should have been able to pro-
“ vide for myself in time by the practice of a
“ more elevated talent.’

“ ‘ But you know, my child,’ returned
“ her ladyship, appearing to soften a little,
“ ‘ the success of exertions of that nature is
“ very uncertain ; and many years must
“ elapse before even great artists can extract
“ a support from their labours—they must
“ wait till time and the voice of the public
“ have given a sanction to their abilities :—
“ besides, it really takes a course of years to
“ acquire

“ acquire excellence sufficient to gain the ap-
“ plause of unprejudiced judges, and I could
“ willingly see you settled in some certain
“ way of providing for yourself; for the de-
“ licacy of my constitution renders the tenure
“ of my life very precarious.—I assure you
“ when I was last ill I thought much about
“ you; and I resolved, if I recovered, to
“ see you speedily fixed in some way of life
“ —for it is dreadful to think to what a fine
“ young woman like you might be subject-
“ ed, without the means of providing for her-
“ self.”

“ Miss Markland, who had all the mo-
“ desty of true genius, with a singular meek-
“ ness of spirit, was much struck by the
“ words ‘unprejudiced judges;’—she began
“ to fear lest the applause she had received
“ might have been given in compliment to
“ the partiality Lady Wittington was
“ supposed to have for her; and that she
“ had over-rated her own talents. She call-
“ ed to mind,—or rather what had been
“ said recalled to her mind, that her birth
“ entitled her to no higher situation than
“ that

“ that her patroness was proposing to place
“ her in; and reflections like these served a
“ little to silence those feelings of disgust
“ which rose at the first hearing Lady Wit-
“ lington’s proposition; yet, though she sub-
“ mitted without murmuring, she could not
“ without lamenting. She recollected it
“ was not only a change of situation, but a
“ change of society, she was about to experi-
“ ence;—but looking on these feelings as
“ the suggestions of a spirit revolting at the
“ dispensations of Providence, she strove to
“ subdue them, and with the best grace she
“ could command, expressed her submission
“ to what her ladyship thought for her best
“ interest. They went that day, and in-
“ quired the particulars they wished to know
“ of the person in question; and it now only
“ remained to pay the compliment to her fa-
“ ther of submitting the scheme to his opi-
“ nion.—This was immediately given in fa-
“ vour of her ladyship’s plan.

“ The day was fixed for her going; —
“ she went—with what sentiments may easily
“ be conceived.

“ When

“ When Mr. Mansel returned from the
“ country he enquired where Miss Markland
“ was ?—he was told ‘ gone into the coun-
“ try.—’ He asked to be informed where,
“ but this was decisively denied by Lady
“ Witlington.—He then declared to her
“ ladyship he would write to Mr. Markland
“ to inquire the residence of his daughter ;—
“ but the very moment he had quitted the
“ house, Lady Witlington sat down and
“ wrote to Mr. Markland, to warn him against
“ discovering to Mr. *Mansel* the place where
“ she had fixed his daughter ; telling him his
“ designs respecting his daughter were not
“ of a right nature, and that it was fearing
“ they might prove fatal to her honour,
“ that she had removed her from her house,
“ and wished to conceal her from Mr.
“ Mansel. The good man, in consequence
“ of this letter, resolutely refused him any
“ information: These obstacles had the con-
“ trary effect from what her ladyship wish-
“ ed ; they only heightened the passion
“ she hoped they would subdue.—He em-
“ ployed intreaties, expostulations, tears, to
“ draw from Lady Witlington the place of
“ Miss

“ Miss Markland’s abode, but she was inex-
“ orable. Fearing, however, that a passion so
“ violent, acting on a mind ardent by nature,
“ would in time, in spite of all her machi-
“ nations, achieve what it aspired to enthu-
“ siastically, she planned a scheme, vile in
“ its projection, and fatal in its execution ;
“ engaging in it one whom she knew had
“ an inclination for the person of Miss
“ Markland—this was a Mr. Neville, a pain-
“ ter, who had been formerly one of her la-
“ dyship’s favourites in the line of gallan-
“ try, and whose abilities as an artist, by
“ her indefatigable exertions, she had brought
“ into notice ; she told him if he would
“ gain the hand of Miss Markland she would
“ present him with a thousand pounds. As
“ he was at this time much pressed by im-
“ portunate creditors, and really was charm-
“ ed with the person of the young lady, he
“ resolved to leave no attempt untried to
“ bring about an event, in all respects to
“ him desirable. By Lady Wittington’s ad-
“ vice he took apartments at the house
“ where she had placed Miss Markland ;
“ here he paid her the most unremitting at-
D “ tentions,

“ tentions, and used all the rhetoric he was
“ master of to conciliate her affections, but
“ in vain ; she was resolute in her refusal.
“ Determined, at all events, to effect the
“ purpose he had in view, he put in prac-
“ tice a stratagem which had at first been
“ mentioned to him by her ladyship as their
“ *dernier resort*. As he boarded in the fa-
“ mily, he had easily an opportunity of in-
“ fusing into something she drank at supper
“ a sleeping potion. The somniferous draught
“ soon operated ; she withdrew. He staid
“ with the other lady till she retired for the
“ night, and then found the chamber of the
“ unhappy Miss Markland, on whom the so-
“ perific liquor had had its natural effects. The
“ morning came—abandoned to despair,
“ she attempted to destroy herself—he pre-
“ vented her : she flung herself into a coach,
“ and was driven to the house of her false
“ friend ; he followed her as fast as possible,
“ he was there almost as soon as herself. She
“ had not had time to articulate a word
“ when he appeared—sighs, tears, and con-
“ vulsive groans alone had told her ladyship
“ her

“ her diabolical plan had had its wished for
“ consequence.

“ “ Approach not, thou monster !”—cried
“ Miss Markland; but finding he still advanced,
“ she was flying out of the room.

“ “ For heaven’s sake !— say one of you
“ what is the meaning of all this ! cried Lady
“ Wittington, with an air of the most finished
“ hypocrisy.’

“ “ O detain me not another moment in
“ his presence !” cried Miss Markland, “ or
“ sure I am I shall do some deed of desperation.”—He barred her passage—he knelt
“ at her feet—pleaded the violence of his
“ passion, which nothing could subdue—
“ swore that he had been instigated to the
“ action he had committed by the hope that
“ she would marry him; and with every
“ mark of well acted passion intreated her
“ instantly to promise him that happiness.

“ She rejected him with the bitterest re-
“ proaches—he implored the mediation of

“ Lady Wittington. Enough had now fallen from them to permit her ladyship with propriety to seem to understand somewhat of the cause of this scene ;—she burst forth into the loudest and most opprobrious invectives against Neville, and seemed strongly to abet Miss Markland in her refusal of his offer. When her ladyship had played this part as long as she thought necessary, she, after having at his earnest entreaty, spoken with him some minutes alone, she returned to Miss Markland, and apparently melted by his supplications and penitence, even solicited her to accept his hand. She painted to her, that if any thing of what had passed should transpire, the world, which always ranks itself on the male side, would never receive her among the number of the innocent ; and that should her father hear any thing to her dishonour, it would bring his reverend hairs with sorrow to the grave. By arguments and suggestions like these, she strove to persuade her that nothing remained to preserve her honour, but to give him her hand. Miss Markland was long
“ inexora-

“ inexorable ; but Lady Wittington, at last,
“ deploring her obstinacy and blindness to
“ her own interest, said that if she persisted
“ in sentiments so injudicious, she must
“ withdraw her countenance and protec-
“ tion.

“ The thought of being left to the world
“ unpatronised, with perhaps a tarnished
“ character ; the distress of her parents, rose
“ to her mind : bewildered between the sup-
“ plications of the one and the arguments of
“ the other, she was at length led to the al-
“ tar. Their marriage was announced in
“ the papers ; young Mansel saw it, and
“ madness was the consequence. His friends
“ were obliged to put him under the care of
“ a physician, eminent for his skill in treat-
“ ing persons afflicted in that way. He was
“ removed to the Doctor’s house a few miles
“ from town.—Here Mrs. Neville visited, and
“ happening to be walking in the garden,
“ one of the ladies of the family requested her
“ to sit down in a little arbour to sing to them:
“ she began. It chanced that Mr. Mansel,
“ who was at that time in a melancholy and

“ quiet state, had been suffered to ramble
“ about the garden. The sound of a voice
“ so well remembered drew him to the place ;
“ the ladies who were with her perceived
“ him approach, but Mrs. Neville did not.
“ He continued fixed to the spot as if be-
“ holding a vision that he feared would the
“ next moment disappear, till she had end-
“ ed her song ; when darting eagerly to-
“ wards her, he exclaimed with looks of the
“ most enthusiastic delight,—Have I at
“ length found her ?—Yes ! it is she, and I
“ am blest for ever. He seemed to have en-
“ tirely lost all ideas of her marriage, and
“ entreated her in the most passionate
“ terms to consent to unite her fate
“ with his. She could make no reply ; the
“ agitation of her mind was only expressed
“ by her countenance. She at length disen-
“ gaged herself and hastened from him,
“ accompanied by the other ladies. He
“ strove to overtake her, and ran wildly
“ from those who attempted to detain him.
“ But, a lucid moment being lent him, the
“ recollection of her marriage flashed upon
“ his

“ his memory.—She is married ! exclaimed
“ he, stopping his course, and flinging him-
“ self on the ground, and then wandering
“ again : Ah ! she can never return : La-
“ dy Wittington will never let her return.
“ And this thought again drove him to that
“ deplorable state of phrenzy, from which
“ he had so recently emerged.

“ The good little woman,” continued
Needham, “ has an infinity of fortitude ; and,
“ I believe, she is looking towards another
“ world, for that happiness she can never
“ expect in this.”

“ Lady Wittington still with the utmost
“ appearance of anxiety, exerts herself to
“ serve Neville and his wife, and in this she
“ acts with judgment : she thinks her con-
“ tinued intercourse with them, and her zeal
“ in behalf of their success in life will appear
“ as evidence against the truth of reports,
“ which in spite of all her caution have cir-
“ culated to her disadvantage.”

The whole company were much affected by the particulars they had heard ; and Sir Harry, looking at Lady Gaythorne, said ;
“ how were you introduced to Lady Wittington ?

“ I met her Ladyship at Mrs. Colville’s assembly, and I thought I could be guilty of
“ no impropriety in making the acquaintance,
“ as I saw her at the house of so respectable
“ a lady.”

“ Yes,” said Needham, “ she often gives
“ a card when Mrs. Colville has a public
“ night ; for that lady, it is well known, piques herself more on the fulness of her
“ rooms on her assembly nights, than on her
“ best virtue. But Lady Wittington is never admitted to her private parties, nor
“ let in when she calls in a morning ; and
“ her visits are always returned by a card,
“ and Mrs. Colville’s chariot, which she
“ contrives to send, when it has set her down
“ at some house in her Ladyship’s neighbourhood.”

Needham

Needham soon after rose and departed.

The moment he was gone, Sir Harry rising hastily, rung the bell; when a servant appearing, "how came it," said he, "that you let in company when Lady Gaythorne desired no one might be admitted?"

"My Lady' Sir, told me she would be at home to every one; and I received no orders since to the contrary."

"You will remember now then," said he, "your lady desires that no one may be admitted." When the servant had disappeared,

"If you recollect, I requested that you would be denied to every one but our expected friends—I thought, after a long journey, a family party would be more agreeable to them than accidental visitors or promiscuous company: I am sure, to me, an evening spent in their society, unmixed with any other, has always afforded the highest, truest, enjoyment."

An effort to maintain her character for good breeding, banished a misty cloud from her Ladyship's brow, and with a blandishing smile, drawing back her head, and just lifting up and shewing the palms of her elegant spread hands, with a look of the most pretty girlish wonder and recollection, she said ;
“ Oh ! I beg your pardon, but I entirely
“ forgot your request. I am obliged to you
“ for reminding me : we should have lost
“ an infinity of pleasure by admitting other
“ company.” This she said, but not from her heart : however the smile, the playful, yet self-reproaching, action entirely subdued Sir Harry's displeasure. Such charms has even the semblance of good humour and ingenuousness ; and the rest of the evening passed away in conversation on the part of Sir Harry and his guests, affectionate, lively, pleasant, and profitable.

C H A P. VII.

WHEN they were alone, Matilda remarked that Conway appeared thoughtful; and, she was not at a loss in guessing the subject of his reflections. The truth is, Conway experienced, at that moment, that sensation of pain which a delicate mind feels, to acknowledge, even to itself, that the judgment or conduct of a beloved friend has been erroneous; and, though he much wished to relieve his mind by conversing with Matilda, he could scarcely bring himself to confess, even to this second self, that he thought with a degree of contempt of the woman his friend had made choice of—and, Matilda guessing by her own thoughts, and his silence, what was passing in his mind, avoided

avoided mentioning Lady Gaythorne. At last, however, he said, " Tell me, Matilda, " what you think of Lady Gaythorne. I " know you will give me your true sentiments, for I have ever found you superior to that little weakness which hangs about many good women, who, fearing the imputation of a tendency to detraction, run into a contrary extreme ; and, by speaking well of all, forfeit justly their claim to the praise of giving the palm to merit alone.—Truth thinks not of the opinion of others, but when called upon, boldly delivers its own. So, now, Matilda, I have furnished you with an answerable reason for speaking your real sentiments.—" I confess to you," said Matilda, " she is a very different woman from that I always thought would have been the choice of Sir Harry Gaythorne ; and, that she is one with whom I would never form an intimate acquaintance."

" I should have known," said Conway, " that the chords of her heart did not vibrate in unison with yours, had I only heard
" her

“ her sing. She has the advantage of a
“ good voice, she executes in a good stile,
“ with neatness and even a degree of brillian-
“ cy, but still there is a something want-
“ ing.”

“ There is wanting that expression, which
“ gives a soul to harmony itself, and for
“ which nothing can compensate ! When I
“ understood that the mother of Lady Gay-
“ thorne was the widow of an English Offi-
“ cer of a noble family, who had retired to
“ St. Omer’s, in order to bring up her
“ daughter, and live in a superior manner
“ on her small income, than she could in
“ England, I had imagined my friend’s wife a
“ well bred, well-informed woman, unac-
“ customed to frivolous pursuits of dissipati-
“ on, and untinctured by the flippant airs
“ that distinguish her followers. My opinion
“ of her mental qualities had been regulated
“ by my knowledge of Sir Harry’s general
“ good taste, his superior understanding,
“ his worth, and elegance of sentiment. I
“ begin, now, to give credit to what Wilmot,
“ who, you know, visited them at St.
“ Omers,

“ Omers, said of them, though at the time
“ I attended not to his observations, know-
“ ing that his strictures on the female part of
“ his acquaintance, are generally more re-
“ markable for sarcasm, than candour and
“ justice. But, I am of opinion he spoke
“ the truth when he said, ‘ He had looked
“ behind the cards and perceived how the
“ game was likely to terminate.’ He ob-
“ served that the mother and daughter play-
“ ed into each other’s hands; the former
“ was anxious to make it appear, that three
“ men of superior rank and fortune, who
“ visited at the house, were desirous of ob-
“ taining the hand of her daughter: to
“ these she paid the most assiduous atten-
“ tion, whilst Sir Harry was present; tak-
“ ing no more notice of him, than the rules
“ of politeness and hospitality demanded.
“ The daughter, on the contrary, appeared
“ totally insensible to their attentions, (which,
“ in fact, were no more than every man of
“ gallantry thinks himself under an indispen-
“ sable necessity to pay to a fine woman)
“ whilst even a glance, a smile of approbati-
“ on, from Sir Harry, seemed to give her
“ extreme

“ extreme satisfaction.—If she sung a plain-
“ tive air, the tenderness it breathed was all
“ directed to him ; and, if she danced, she
“ looked at no one but him for admiration
“ and applause. These *seeming* indications of
“ a passion, to which he could not be blind,
“ joined to the conduct of her mother, who
“ acted the part of a woman, invincibly de-
“ termined to dispose of her child to the high-
“ est bidder ; without consulting her inclina-
“ tion, flattered that degree of self love,
“ which every man possesses, and gave birth
“ to a better sentiment, that of pity for her
“ situation. He thought the attachment
“ she displayed, disinterested ; for her mo-
“ ther’s artful conversation and deportment
“ had persuaded him that she might match
“ higher, if fortune was her only object.
“ He wished her happiness, he was anxiously
“ interested in what concerned her ; from
“ some motive or other he felt himself drawn
“ to seek her society.—From these sensati-
“ ons, as he had never loved, he fancied
“ that he now loved ; he acted accordingly ;
“ he married.”—“ And I fear Wilmot’s
“ words are already verified,” That the
“ seeds

“ seeds of frivolity which the conduct and
“ lessons of her mother, had so thickly sown
“ in her bosom, when warmed by the sun-
“ shine of prosperity would soon spring up
“ and over-shadow for ever, the happiness
“ of her friend.”

Matilda only answered by a look, that expressed her pity for the disappointment of one whom her mind had pictured to amiable as it had Sir Harry ; and the conversation, for that time ended.

C H A P. VIII.

THEY were at the Opera the next evening, and from thence went to Ranelagh. At their entrance, Lady Gaythorne immediately began to exert her voice in a way that perfectly astonished Mrs. Conway, who had till then, heard only the languid tones of affected softness proceed from it; nor knew she how to account for the sudden change, till they approached the orchestra, when Lady Gaythorne, fearing they might, any of them make a pause in their walk, said, "No body listens to the music this season," and quickened her pace. Matilda instantly perceived for what reason she had talked so loudly, and so fast, namely, that of convincing every body near enough to be annoyed by

by her loudness, that she was not so unfashionable as to attend to the music.

In a few minutes, a buzzing sound was heard, which was occasioned by the entrance of the Prince of —— ! And, now, the countenance of every female, matron, maiden, prude, or courtesan, was adjusted to the air considered most advantageous to the features of each.

The plumage of all expanded ; or, (if the expression is deemed objectionable) was set in motion : a thousand graces were thrown into the movements of the heads and necks, and information anxiously sought from every glass pannel, concerning the general appearance of the figures that passed them. The free unembarrassed air of Lady Gaythorne, and the style of her dress, which solicited observation, arrested the eye of the Prince. For though the real beauty, and animated intelligence of Mrs. Conway's countenance could not pass unnoticed, Lady G—— soonest caught, and longest rivetted the attention of the votaries of fashion.

It

It would be difficult to describe the exultation Lady Gaythorne displayed at the general gaze ; which the Prince's stopping to notice her, had much increased, and the triumph of her heart was unbounded, when in a few minutes after, Mr. Needham joined them, exclaiming, " The manners of this age are without parallel, our young men of fashion have so little regard to decency that they do not scruple to boast their profigate wishes respecting women whose conduct gives them no cause for hope. Colonel St. Clare has just been swearing that Sir Harry Gaythorne is the most unconscionable being in the world, to think of monopolizing so much elegance and beauty. The Prince, he says, protests you are the most captivating woman he has seen to night."

At this information, whether true or false, the eyes of Lady Gaythorne shot forth the glances of inflated vanity ; she even obliged those of whom he had spoken, to corroborate what he had said, by looking at them whenever they passed her, with that conscious air
that

that demands particular observation. When they were to return home, Lady Gaythorne insisted upon Needham's supping with them.

During the remainder of the night, though she was in the pleasanterest humour imaginable with every one else, she was in the worst humour in the world with Sir Harry.—Indeed, a close observer might perceive that she looked upon him as one who had done her an injury by putting a bound to her triumphs, and treated him with the most marked indifference.

That perfect perception of politeness and delicacy which belonged to Conway, kept him always from running into the too common error of letting, when in company, the object of his particular affections engross a disproportionate share of his attention.—A conduct which generally disgusts, as it betrays a narrow soul, ever bent on gratifying its own propensities. We enter into society mutually to give and to receive the offices of courtesy ; to enliven by the play of wit, to amuse by the observations of sentiment,

ment, or to instruct by the documents of experience. But, this cannot be done if our attempts to please be confined to one object; a mind, elegant and benevolent, revolts from the idea, and would sooner do violence to its own feelings, than wear the garb of selfishness. Yet though Conway avoided offending others by particular marks of distinction, he never wounded the heart he loved, by neglect.

His respectful attention to Matilda's sentiments, and his looks of approbation, always spoke her to be the object of his highest esteem and affectionate admiration.—A conduct so charmingly delicate and refined, would have insured him the respect of a woman of sense and feeling; but Lady Gaythorne saw it in another light — the rage of conquest glowed with such fury in her breast, that she thought it was not sufficient that no woman should be particularly distinguished in her company; but she deemed it as no more than justice to her charms, that they should all be treated with peculiar marks of neglect whenever she appeared. Of course,
the

the behaviour of Conway displeased her ; it piqued her pride—and she strove to attract his particular notice, by every alluring wile she had learned in the school of gallantry to ensnare and captivate attention.

After supper, when she was requested to sing by Sir Harry, she obstinately refused ; Needham and Mrs. Conway united their solicitations, yet with no more success : but the moment Conway uttered a request, she complied.—This little compliment pleased him, perhaps, more than he was conscious of himself, and made him perceive harmony and expression in her warbling he would not have discovered without it. She made him chuse the song, and whilst she sung it, she appeared to see no one but him ; and whether she really excelled herself, or that Conway was too much blinded by the charms of the singer to be a fastidious critic, we know not, but he seemed really to feel the pleasure he expressed, by a lively seizure of her hand, and an enthusiastic repetition of the word charming !

Matilda

Matilda was surprised and somewhat hurt ; she had heard his sentiments the evening before, and she deemed they must have been altered by some powerful magic, or that Conway had been insincere enough to affect more pleasure than politeness demanded.

When they were alone, Matilda said to him, “ You appeared much delighted with “ Lady Gaythorne’s song.”—Yes,” replied “ Conway ; “ whether it is that she has more “ sensibility than we imagined, or that she “ accidentally hit upon the true expression “ of the song, as an unskilful singer, whilst “ touching carelessly the keys of an instru- “ ment, may chance to strike some note of “ harmony, I don’t pretend absolutely to “ determine ; but, I own I could not have “ believed she could have given so much “ pleasure to the mind.”

“ I should rather suppose it the effect of “ accident,” said Matilda ; for, I cannot be- “ lieve she can have much real sensibility, or “ she could not show so cruel an indifference “ to Sir Harry, whose tenderness of heart, and “ sweetness

“sweetness of manners, speak in his every
“word and action.”

“I am inclined to think,” returned Conway, “that our friend is not the object
“of her choice ; but, rather that of an art-
“ful mother. If so, as those invisible hands
“are beyond human skill to form, which
“draw and unite hearts, and our affections
“are not in our own power, is not she more
“to be pitied than blamed, all accomplished
“and worthy of her heart, as Sir Harry is,
“that she cannot love him ?”

“Your sentiment is just ; but, why, my
“dear Conway, should she not show him the
“esteem, the respect that is due to every
“amiable man with whom she is acquaint-
“ed ? female delicacy, gratitude, a nice sense
“of honour, justice, every tie of duty de-
“mands this.”

“Alas !” said Conway, “we argue well
“upon situations in which we are not called
“to act. A long course of suffering of any
“kind, has, sometimes, the [salutary effect
“of

“ of improving the heart, and giving a philosophic turn to the mind, but the first wounds of the heart generally inflame, if they do not fester it; and, when condemned to drag a galling chain, it is not to be wondered at, if the mind sometimes loses sight even of justice and of gratitude.”

“ True,” said Matilda, “ but I do not think she has a soul capable of true passion.—You first give her, by the aid of imagination, your own sort of mind, and then argue from its operations. However, as it is not in our power to make our friend’s lot better by dwelling on the subject, we will drop it if you please.”

“ And, whilst we give a sigh to his fate,” said Conway, “ let us thank Providence who has made our lot so different.”

“ Most truly, do I,” returned Matilda, with energy every feeling of an affectionate

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passionate heart revealing itself in the
softened tone of her voice; "most truly
"do I."

C H A P. IX.

THEY went the next morning to Mrs. Neville's; Needham met them there: Lady Gaythorne moved with rapidity from room to room; her criticisms were delivered at random, as if she claimed a right without having studied the art she spoke of, to give law to approbation. This is good;—that is bad;—I like this;—I can't bear that;—were her favourite expressions.—In the article of drapery, she thought herself qualified to judge beyond any one in the gallery; and, indeed, every one gave her credit for her decision, when she pronounced that the bonnet in which Lady T—— was drawn, was fit only for the head of a chambermaid. However, upon the whole, she

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liked

liked the pictures so well, that she told Mrs. Neville she would sit with great pleasure to her pencil.—Mrs. Neville asked if her ladyship had fixed on any historical subject, or if she meant to be drawn simply as a portrait.

“ Oh ! an historical subject by all means,” said her ladyship. “ We talked of a great many the other evening ; did we not, Mr. Needham ?—what was the last ?—which was that I think we concluded would be the most proper.”

“ Venus introducing Helen to Paris after his defeat ;” said Needham.

“ Oh, yes, so it was. Don’t you think, Mrs. Neville, it will be quite the thing ?”

“ Hah ! extremely well chosen ;—and if your ladyship will do me the honour to sit now, I will sketch in the figures.”

“ But then you will want a Paris,” exclaimed Needham.

“ Perhaps

“ Perhaps Sir Harry would be kind enough
“ to fit,” said Mrs. Neville.

“ O ! Lard, Mrs. Neville, that will be
“ quite ridiculous.—Husband and wife sit-
“ ting looking at each other.—Heavens !
“ what a stupid picture of Helen and Pa-
“ ris !”

“ Come, Mr. Conway, will you be the
“ Paris then ?” said Mr. Needham. “ Who
“ that was thought worthy,” returned he,
“ would refuse to be the Paris to such a He-
“ len ?”

This speech, though uttered in the tone of common place gallantry, hurt Matilda; it recalled to her recollection what had passed the night before, and she trembled; for she had a mind, as the reader may have observed, that loved to indulge itself in philosophic reflections; and it was an observation of hers, that the woman who had power, by whatever means, to remove disgust, had a greater chance to ensnare than she who at first had attracted a slight degree of admiration.

“ I don’t think that Mr. Conway’s person is in the stile of Paris,” said Matilda ; perhaps hardly knowing what she said.

“ Lord,” cried Lady Gaythorne, should “ it not be an elegant man ?”

“ Certainly, Madam,” returned Mrs. Conway ; “ but your ladyship knows a man “ may be handsome, elegant, and young, and “ not have the character of beauty imagination assigns to Paris.”

“ Very true, Madam,” replied Lady Gaythorne ; but at the same time she looked at Conway with a sort of a half smile, half sneer, on her face, that said, “ Your wife “ will not let you ;” and moved away.

We are sorry to confess that the sneer of such a being had power to mortify a man of Conway’s excellent sense ; though at the bottom, he certainly could not but be pleased with the proof this little display of Matilda’s quick sensibility gave of the liveliness of her attachment to himself. He thought it best however, not to seem to enter into the sentiments

ments of either of the ladies ; but with that happy presence of mind which gives perfection to good breeding, he turned to Mrs. Neville, and said, gaily, " If the Goddess
" who is now to bring Helen and Paris together, like that of old, endow but the
" youthful warrior with her own graces, he
" cannot fail to please."

Mrs. Neville bowed, and proceeded to direct the attitudes in which she wished them to place themselves.

The air Lady Gaythorne assumed, though it had not that elegant voluptuousness which should have distinguished the fair Grecian, was sufficiently alluring ; for at that moment vanity was mining ten thousand right feelings in Conway's susceptible heart, and cast into his countenance an expression not widely distant from the ideal character he was to represent. Matilda felt a good deal of uneasiness, but she strove to examine the pictures, hoping, by that means, her chagrin would be hidden from others ; and gladly would she have concealed the cause of it

even from herself. At last they departed from Mrs. Neville's, and after taking an airing, returned home to dine.—As soon as dinner was over Sir Harry left his friend to go to the House of Commons, an interesting debate being expected to come on.

Conway went immediately to the drawing room to seek the ladies. He found only Lady Gaythorne there—Mrs. Conway having quitted her to write letters. She was sitting on a sofa, with a pair of diamond bracelets in her hand, which, on his entrance, she held to him, and asked him how he liked them? saying they were just sent from Grey's, and were the present of Sir Harry.—

“ Beautiful indeed !—How happy is Sir
“ Harry to have it in his power to adorn
“ with so much splendor the object of his
“ choice,” said he, seating himself beside her ; and placing one of the bracelets on her arm, held her hand in his to look at it. At that instant, with an expression of *melancholy*, she exclaimed, “ What are jewels !”—
The

The air with which this was said, confirmed Conway in the idea that she had not followed the bent of her own feelings in giving her hand to Sir Harry ; and the distinction with which she had treated him, led him to think she would have preferred him. The co-operation of these thoughts produced sensations of pity and regard, that involuntarily led him to press the hand he had in his with a look of sympathy.—At that moment she threw into her face the look she had practised for Helen, and endeavoured to disengage her hand. He no longer doubted that she had for him a peculiar regard ; and he instantly saw in that look a struggle between honour and the heart's affections.

She made a sort of feint to withdraw her hand—he still kept it ;—and fired by the rays she darted from her eyes, he drew it eagerly to his lips.—Just then the door opened and Mrs. Conway entered. Her respiration was for a moment suspended ; but she quickly recovered herself, and moved to a seat.—Conway was confused and changed color ; but Lady Gaythorne, with perfect

composure, said “ My dear Mrs. Conway,
“ I want your opinion of these bracelets.—
“ Do you know that Mr. Conway has quite
“ affronted me by not admiring them ;—
“ and so he would not be convinced that I
“ forgave him unless I permitted him to seal
“ his pardon on my hand.”

Matilda had by this time sufficiently recovered herself to reply without seeming to have bestowed a second thought on what she had seen—“ Indeed they are beautiful,
“ and I should have thought the taste and
“ elegance of the setting would have pleased
“ him.” Matilda’s behaviour, contrasted so strongly with the ready but pitiful evasion of Lady Gaythorne, that Conway hated himself for having for a moment been dazzled by *her artful* allurements : but the efforts Matilda made to suppress the appearance of uneasiness, made it operate but the more strongly internally.—When she reflected on what had passed in the morning, and added to it what she had now seen, her heart was agitated with the most painful fears.—She strove to join in the conversation, and to appear

pear chearful—but her endeavours to conceal, betrayed the state of her mind more than her silence, for she often abruptly dropped the subject she had started, or returned incoherent answers to what was addressed to her.—Conway, who marked her absence of mind, was much affected. “Good God!” said he to himself, “that a woman whom, “though I cannot but pity on some accounts, “on others I must despise, should have had “power to cause me to give uneasiness to “one of the most amiable creatures in the “world.”

He waited with the anxiety of a lover for an opportunity to relieve the heart of Matilda, and to make his peace with her.

C H A P. X.

AS soon as Matilda had retired for the evening, she threw herself on a sofa in her dressing-room, and there began to re-contemplate all that had passed, and was so totally absorbed in these meditations, that Jenny, who stood ready with fillets to bind up those locks she had in the morning exhausted all her art to display, asked her twice if she should take off her head dress without being heard. Her throat became convulsed, and in a moment tears streamed down her cheeks, Jenny, alarmed, ran instantly to the bell, but Matilda said, faintly to her, before she had reached it, "I shall be better presently, if you will give me a little water."

She

She had a good deal recovered when Conway rapped at the door, and asked if he might be admitted? Matilda wiped her eyes, and cheered her countenance, in the hope he would not perceive she had been weeping. He said he had something to say, and bade Jenny leave the room. He instantly perceived that something had disordered her and taking hold of her hand with the voice of tenderness, he said, "You have been ill
"—tell me what has disordered you."

"I had a little hystheric, which soon went off;—I am quite well indeed!"

"No, Matilda," returned he—"no you are not well—something has given you uneasiness.—If I have been the cause, scruple not to reproach me with it.—You know I am not averse to having my faults pointed out to me."

"I have said nothing to make you think you have been the cause of uneasiness, and if you had, you know I detest reproaches—they are too often apt to bring
" on

“ on severe words that frequently leave a
“ sting behind harder to endure than the
“ original cause of complaint.”

“ If you will not tell me, then, in what
“ I have been wrong, tell me how you
“ would wish me to act towards you.”

“ Only to love me every moment of your
“ life, as I am sure I do you.”

“ Shall I tell you, then, my dear girl,
“ how I construe your expressions:—you
“ think there have been some moments of
“ my life in which I have forgotten you:—
“ perhaps you may have drawn this conclu-
“ sion from some expression of mine, rather
“ too lively, or from some little levity of
“ manner.”

Matilda changed colour.

“ Confess, now, that it was so,” said
Conway.

“ I will

“ I will own,” said Matilda, “ I have
“ already wished we were gotten back to our
“ old way of life in the country.”

“ You cannot, Matilda, have more plea-
“ sure in the thought of returning, than I
“ have; and, you know my motive for wish-
“ ing to quit our home, was not that of en-
“ tering into the amusements of a town life.

“ Forgive me, Conway, I will no longer
“ harbour a thought like distrust:—I see you
“ still possess that towering virtue, sincerity,
“ whose ample shade can hide a thousand
“ faults: and did you cease to love me, I
“ am sure you would not seek to disguise the
“ change, by acting a continual falsehood.

“ Cease to love you? Good God! can
“ you doubt the existence of a flame that
“ has so long burnt steadily, though the flut-
“ tering of an insect had power to obstruct
“ the light of it for a moment.”

“ But, we have often seen,” returned
Matilda, “ the fluttering of a small insect
“ extinguish

“extinguish a clear and luminous flame ;
“and the torch of Hymen once extinguished
“can never be renewed.”

“You continue, Matilda,” replied Conway, “to speak with so much solemnity on
“the subject, that I shall think your distrust is fixed.”

“Oh, heavens ! but, indeed it is not,”
“said she : forgive all that is said ; I blame
“my own folly more than you can do.”

He turned towards her at the supplicating softness of her voice, and holding her to him,
“Thus,” said he, “let us mutually seal each others forgiveness.”

Matilda gave a few tears to their reconciliation, breathing out, “We shall soon
“see our rural home, and our lovely children.”

“I am sure,” said Conway, you cannot
“have more pleasure in that thought than
“I have ;

" I have ; I do not desire a town life myself,
 " and I see that it does not suit with you.
 " You have a mind too highly wrought to
 " relish the glare of life, and like the soft
 " myrtle flourish best in the shade."

In a few days the Parliament was adjourn-
 ed ; and the town was emptying apace :
 Conway now reminded Sir Harry and Lady
 Gaythorne of their promise ; and his request
 that they would immediately put it in ex-
 ecution, being warmly seconded by Mrs.
 Conway, was acceded to.

The singularity of Needham's character
 made Mr. Conway desire to have more of
 his company, and as he was a constant visi-
 tor at Sir Harry's, and happened to be pre-
 sent when their departure was proposed, he
 gave him an invitation to go with them ;
 which, though he had an invitation from a
 peer on his hands, he accepted with avidity,
 because it was the means of cementing a
 new acquaintance, and that was always to
 him a considerable acquisition.

When

When they arrived at——, and were driving through the little park that led to the mansion of Conway, they saw at the foot of an old oak their children, with their laps full of the sweetest flowers of the spring, some of which a female servant who attended them had formed into balls, which they were throwing at one another ; whilst she was fantastically adorning them with chaplets artlessly woven.—Matilda's eyes sparkled with pleasure at this sight. “ There are the dear little things,” she exclaimed.

Lady Gaythorne remarked the pleasure with which Conway seemed to observe this little ebullition of maternal affection. She had perceived that though he had at first been somewhat dazzled with her light and flippant gaiety—her levity of manner, by being too often repeated till novelty wore away, inspired him with reflection, and put him upon examining his feelings and guarding against their tendencies : this plan not having been successful, Lady Gaythorne set about forming a net of different materials.

But

But to return.

Soon after they got into the house the children were brought in, and all present were struck with the notice Lady Gaythorne took of them ; the good humoured manner in which she talked to, and endeavoured to amuse them, made Conway begin to resume his former opinion that she had naturally a good heart, which had been warped by a wrong education, and too early a commerce with the world.

Even Matilda was pleased with her behaviour, though she did not, perhaps, place it to so favourable an account, but with a parent's partiality imputed it to the superior beauty and engaging manners of her little ones.

C H A P. XL

TH E next day being Sunday, they went to church. Sir Harry remarked the clergyman as a man of respectable appearance, with a clear, unaffected delivery. Mr. Conway replied, that he was a man of a regular, inoffensive character, of a good understanding, and moderately learned. But, that he was much straitened in his circumstances, having a large family, and but very slender preferment in the church.

Mr. Williams was the son of an inn-keeper, who, finding he had a propensity to letters, bred him to the church; but died soon after he had taken orders, and having several children, their portions, when the property of the father came to be divided, were very small. Young Williams, not having
ing

ing those luminous talents, which in spite of all disadvantages sometimes recommend an obscure man to patronage, was forced to exist for a few years on a curacy of twenty pounds a year—but marrying a young woman who had served a lady of quality, through her interest he obtained a living of about a hundred and fifty pounds a year : upon this, burdened with a family of seven or eight children, they now live. Sir Harry said he had it not in his power himself to serve him, having promised the next presentation of a living in his gift to a gentleman whom he knew at college ; but that he would speak to his friend, the Bishop of——, in his behalf.—Mr. Conway brought Mr. Williams home to dine with them, and Mrs. Conway sent to invite Mrs. Williams and the young ladies, to take their tea with them in the afternoon.

This woman was by no means a favourite with Mrs. Conway ; but, she chose to pay her the attentions of a neighbour, out of respect to her husband's character and profession ; and often made her presents,
which

which the narrowness of Mr. Williams's income rendered very acceptable to her.

Mrs. Williams was illiterate, conceited, and vain to excess ; however, she had the art of concealing her disposition before those on whom she was dependant.—By studying the humour of the lady she served, entering into her caprices, flattering her beauty, and pretending to admire the most faulty parts of her person and character, she had lived several years in great favour in a family where luxury reigned, and œconomy was unknown. She was, of course ill qualified to bring up a family with decency, on an income which required much œconomy in the management of it. Her children showed the symptoms of almost total neglect ; when young, they were sickly, dirty, and fretful ; and when grown up, proud, envious and ignorant. She was flatteringly at home, and tawdry abroad, for she still retained and indulged her passion for finery ;—and, on a Sunday at church, or when paying visits, she still exhibited the remains of her lady's cast wardrobe, mixed with such inferior additions as her present finances allowed her to

to make.—Too large a portion of the time of Mrs. Williams and her daughters was exhausted in preparations for visiting and receiving their acquaintance, to leave much for the necessary avocations which neatness and œconomy demanded. Their society, which chiefly consisted of a few card playing old ladies, of small fortunes, whose company was little coveted by either the young, the lively, or the rich; the family of the apothecary they employed, an attorney's wife, or two, and a few ladies whose husbands had just turned their counters into card tables, and given their families an opportunity of creeping into the society of the fashionable circle of a country town.

They sometimes graced the card and dancing assemblies with their presence; but there was generally some severe jest or other ran through the room, on the shabby decorations of the daughters, or the vulgarity of the mother, that sent them home vexed enough to put them in an ill humour with every one they found there, without having the salutary effect of teaching them the useful lesson

of

of concealing the narrowness of their circumstances, by retiring from public view to pursue less expensive amusements, and the sober employments of domestic life.

But, though Mrs. Williams frequented the card-tables of some few ladies whose husbands had been in trade, with the hope of winning their money, she instilled into the minds of her daughters the most sovereign contempt for them ; and even many of those whom she now visited, before their apostacy from shop-keeping, she had on many occasions reviled for daring to wear better cloaths than herself.

I said, when she made her appearance at church she was always equipped in her best attire,—but this rarely happened except of an afternoon, for visiting and card playing swallowed up so much of her time in the week days, that she usually spent the Sunday morning in mending in a slovenly manner the cloaths of the family.

Mr.

Mr. Williams would have rejoiced to have seen his family better conducted ; but he was restrained from expressing his wishes on that head, by the fear of calling forth his wife's eloquence, which, not unfrequently broke forth in torrents that almost overwhelmed him—and upon a subject that would have been inexhaustable had they lived to a patriarchial age, which was her having procured for him the only living he held.

There was one thing, however, in which the good man was resolute ; and that was in taking all his children to church with him, if not prevented by sickness ; but this laudable act of authority he could never carry into execution without frequent hints to hasten them. To these hints he commonly received such replies as, “ Lord, papa, I can't come yet, for I am drawing up a hole in Ned's stocking ; and I,” said another, “ am putting a little ink upon Sukey's toe, to hide the whole in her shoe :”—“ and I,” said a third, “ am running up a rent in my petticoat :”—“ and for my part,” said a fourth, “ I know not that I can go

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“ at

“ at all, for Suky has used all my pomatum,
“ and my hair is not half dressed.” By this means they were seldom ready till too near the hour of appearing in church.—And often when they had sallied forth, it was a hundred chances to one, but some one of them discovered an aperture that necessitated the party to run back and get their mother to stitch up.—This caused Mr. Williams, at length, to make it a rule, before he passed over the threshold, to desire them to examine their clothes; and this circumstance being told rather ludicrously by one of their servants, it became a bye word in the parish: “ Come, before we proceed any farther let us examine if there is any thing
“ remains to be sewed.”

C H A P. XII.

MRS. Williams came to tea accompanied by her eldest daughter ; a tall, yellow-complexioned young lady, with a look expressive of sarcastic impertinence : her dress was an old fashioned turmeric coloured silk gown, flowered with shades of red : her petticoat of white lustring, which had been scourged, was trimmed with a flounce of washed gauze, from below which a dirty green stuff petticoat made its appearance : her neck, the texture of which had not been rendered coarse by too frequent ablutions of water, was decorated by a soiled gauze handkerchief, under which her interior drapery was here and there discernable, and which not being of the whitest hue, served like brown

F 2 powder

powder to heighten the lilies of her complexion.

Soon after they were seated, Mrs. Williams asked who that strange lady was who sat in farmer Markland's pew.

"Lard, papa, did not you know her?
"Why it is his daughter from London, Fanny Markland that was, and drawn forth
"at a prodigious rate I assure you."

"Why, what had she on, child?" eagerly asked Mrs. Williams, with great impatience.

"Why, mama, she had on as delicate a
"chintz gown as ever you, I suppose, would
"wish to see; and a large fashionable bonnet."

"Upon my word," replied the mother,
"a very fine lady: I declare it's a shame:
"but farmers' daughters now dress as fine
"as gentlewomen; nay, one can't distinguish them from real ladies."

"Not

“Not perhaps, in public places,” returned Mrs. Conway; “but a real gentleman can be imitated by vulgar people only in dress; her conversation and deportment will always shew, that a liberal education, manifested in her superior complacency and elegance of manners, forms such an essential difference, as no dress, however æconomical, can hide; and for the want of which no dress, however rich and studied, can compensate.”

“You are perfectly right, Madam,” said Miss Anne; “I dare say she is a vulgar creature when you come to talk with her.”

“Indeed, Anne, she did not look so,” said Mrs. Williams.

“What person is it you speak of, Miss Williams;” said Mrs. Conway.

“Why, Madam,” replied she, “it is the daughter of a farmer whom Lady Wilt-
“lington took a fancy to, from being shewn

“ some of her drawings when she was a
“ school girl, and her ladyship took her to
“ live with her; but to be sure, you know
“ she could be nothing but a servant, Sir,”
“ turning to Needham, who sat next to
“ her.

“ No, Madam,” replied he, very senten-
tiously, “ indeed, I do not know.”

Miss Anne was a little disconcerted, but
soon resumed her conversation—“ And so,
“ Madam, as I have been told, she is mar-
“ ried, and gets her living by painting.”

“ Perhaps,” said Mrs. Williams, with the
quick respiration of envious alarm, “ per-
“ haps, though she may get a great deal of
“ money; for I remember when I lived as
“ companion to Lady D——, her ladyship
“ had her picture drawn, and it cost a vast
“ deal of money, and all the great people
“ took notice of the painter.

“ Oh, Yes,” cried Miss Williams; but
“ that must have been a capital hand, not
“ such

“such an insignificant creature as Mrs. Neville.”

“Very true, child,” said Mrs. Williams, her anxiety a little composed; “I dare say, nobody takes any notice of her.”

“Oh! no, mama, I dare say not: you know one hears the names of all the great painters mentioned in the public prints; but one never hears of Mrs. Neville, as a person of great abilities, you know, Sir.”

“Yes, Madam,” replied Needham, the name of Mrs. Neville is often mentioned with respect; though her fame, which began among the higher class of people, has not yet descended to the vulgar.

“Mrs. Neville is the lady who is to paint your ladyship’s picture is she not,” said Mrs. Conway, turning to Lady Gaythorne.

“Yes,” said Lady Gaythorne, “I believe she is; but I don’t perfectly recollect.”

“—Is she the same person, Mr. Needham?”

“There is but one lady who paints of that name,” he replied.

“Upon my word,” said Mrs. Conway, “when I saw her at Lady Gaythorne’s, and afterwards at her own house, I thought her a very pleasing woman, and one who had conversed with, and acquired the manners of the best company.”

The Williams seemed thunder struck, and their wonder was heightened when Lady Gaythorne who had a wish to convince even the family of a little country clergyman, that she never condescended to notice persons whom nobody knows,” now exerted herself sufficiently to say, “The first time Lady Wittington introduced her to me, was at Lady Bell Gray’s assembly.”

The Williams could now scarcely breathe, so much were they astonished.

“Well,

“ Well, indeed, 'tis amazing,” said Miss Williams ; “ why, do you know her father “ is only a very middling farmer—but some “ people have such luck—”

“ Luck, indeed,” cried Mrs. Williams : “ why now, my daughter, I do assure you, “ you went to the very self same boarding- “ school as she did, and was there, indeed, “ as much as a year, or more, longer than “ this girl ; and learnt drawing of the self- “ same indentical master, and was exceed- “ ingly apt and clever too ; and you see “ why she had not luck to meet with any “ one to notice her. Well, people may very “ well say it is better to be born fortunate “ than rich.”

“ I wonder none of our family observed “ her at church ;—I wish I had seen her,” said Mrs. Conway.

“ In your pew, Madam,” said Mrs. Wil- “ liams, “ you could not see her ; and in “ going to church, I remarked that she walk-

“ed immediately home with her father,
“ without staying to speak to any body.”

“ I protest,” exclaimed Needham, who sat on a stool in the window, “ I do believe
“ that the lady who is now passing the gate
is Mrs. Neville !”

“ It is, I really think,” said Mrs. Conway ;—“ I wish she would call here. If
“ we were to walk round, and go out of the
“ little door in the park walk, we should
“ meet her, and we might then invite
“ her in.

“ The shower that has fallen has made
“ the grass wet—and I think it would be
“ very improper for you to walk,” said Conway.

“ Do you think so ?” said Mrs. Conway.

“ Oh dear—I wish we could go,” said Lady Gaythorne, with an earnestness which, whether real or affected, pleased Conway.

“ Upon

“ Upon my word, I would not have you
“ venture, ladies,” said Conway ;—“ but if
“ Mr. Needham pleases, we will go ; and as
“ he is an old acquaintance, perhaps we
“ may both together prevail upon her to
“ overlook the etiquette of your going to pay
“ her the first visit, and to favour us with her
“ company for an hour or two.”

“ Go then, directly,” said Mrs. Conway,
and immediately they snatched up their
hats, and set out. They presently returned
with Mrs. Neville. The moment they
came into the house, Mrs. Conway rose
from her seat, and, quick as thought, opened
the door of the room in which they
were sitting, and held it till Conway introduced
Mrs. Neville ; when taking her
hand with a low courtsey, she said, “ This
“ is extremely kind,” and led her to the top
of the room. The respect with which
Mrs. Conway treated her visitor, and the
polite ease with which she received these
marks of attention, convinced the Williams
that they were not new to her,
and inspired the most pungent heart burning.

ing. The conversation turned on the fine arts and polite literature. Conway shewed Mrs. Neville, and asked her opinion of a little collection of pictures he had made from some of the best masters, ancient and modern. But this conversation was soon interrupted ; and by the address of Lady Gaythorne, the diversions of the town became the topic, in which Mrs. Neville bore no inconsiderable part, to the great mortification of Mrs. Williams and her daughter, who were constrained by dire necessity to be totally silent :—so that, unable to bear the scene any longer, Mrs. Williams soon took her leave, impatient to have an opportunity of unburthening her mind to her daughter. Mrs. Neville staid after them, and partook of a little supper ;—the conversation held, as it was seasoned by the salt of attic wit, and elegant pleasantry.

With all that Mrs. Neville said, Lady Gaythorne had the address to seem pleased, and treated her with so much attention and respect, that Conway was charmed with the proof, as he thought, this gave of a mind
na-

naturally liberal and he could not help exclaiming when they were alone, to Mrs. Conway,
 “ How invaluable a blessing is a just education, and how liable are the best disposed
 “ minds to be warped by a bad one !”

C H A P. XIII.

THE next morning when they walked out, Conway walked with Lady Gaythorne; and Needham and Sir Harry strolled on before with Mrs. Conway.—“Is Mrs. Conway ill?” said Lady Gaythorne; “she looks quite indisposed to day”

“She is uneasy about one of her children.”

“Is she?” replied Lady Gaythorne:
“—I wonder she did not mention it at breakfast!”

“Oh no,” said he, “Matilda is of all human beings the least inclined to let others partake of her troubles;—though at
“all

“all times ready to communicate her comforts and her joys.”

“You give her a charming character:”—
“Indeed she is deserving of it,” he returned.

“Oh, I have no doubt of it,” cried she;
“for Sir Harry told me you married for love;
“—and in that case, I suppose, if she had
“but few merits, your imagination would
“supply them;—at least, if the same partiality continues after marriage,—which I
“should like to know from one who had
“really felt what is called a romantic passion.”

This frank, though indirect avowal, of her not having married under the influence of an affectionate attachment, struck Conway for some moments silent. He felt for the fate of his friend—he felt there was an indelicacy in her confession; but in another moment he found himself inclined to excuse, rather than blame her; and to look upon it as the unguarded ebullition of a too incautious

incautious heart, by reflecting on the manners of the country in which she had resided, and the sentiments in which she had been educated. He remained absorbed in thought, till she reiterated with an appearance of frankness and simplicity that interested him.

“ I should like to have the question answered by one who had really experienced a true passion.”

“ A true passion, madam,” replied Conway, who began to recover a more disengaged manner,” “ never departs from the heart, though after uninterrupted possession of the object, it takes a new, but not less pleasing, form.—Nor is it difficult to account for the change. Before marriage, the lover, even if he be an acknowledged one has, comparatively, few opportunities of enjoying the society of his mistress. In those short moments he has a thousand fears to relate on his own part—a thousand doubts to clear upon her’s; and scarcely has he felt the tear of reconciliaton, or the pressure of endearment, before
“ the

“ the moment of separation arrives, and he
“ goes away at last, reproaching his too
“ treacherous memory with having forgot-
“ ten a thousand things he had to say. Thus
“ grief, joy, hope, despair, perplexity and
“ delight, alternately sway his breast, and
“ keep it in continual tumult. Possession
“ calms this perturbation, and inspires an
“ affection that fills without agitating the
“ soul ;—its raptures are less tumultuous,
“ because its anxieties are fewer :—yet, let
“ but an incident occur to place in a new
“ or stronger light some virtue, grace or ac-
“ complishment of the object of his affec-
“ tions ; let sickness or calamity menace
“ the loss of her, and wedded love instantly
“ proves its energy by kindling to transport,
“ or sinking to despair.”

“ On my word,” said Lady Gaythorne,
“ you make an exquisite description.—How
“ much must they lose who never knew the
“ charms of such a state !”

There was a something in her manner of
saying this which, as it had the appearance
of

of real sensibility, melted the heart of Conway. "To change the subject," cried he, "Do you see that farm house which stands so pleasingly on that hill before us ?—It is the house where Mrs. Neville's father lives."

"Let us go and return her visit," said she. Conway was pleased with her proposal and stepping to Mrs. Conway, he said "Lady Gaythorne wishes us to lengthen our walk, and call upon Mrs. Neville."

"But I am fearful," said Lady Gaythorne, "that it will fatigue Mrs. Conway, as she seems not well."

"Oh, not at all :—I shall be very happy to return her visit."

When they arrived at the gate of the fold yard of the farm, they were met by a venerable looking man of about sixty, with the implements of husbandry upon his shoulder, and whose athletic frame and healthful countenance spoke the activity of his life.—They inquired if Mr. Neville

was at home. Parental joy animated his open aspect, and with a bend of his body that had in it the graceful simplicity of patriarchal times, he thanked them for the honour they did him, and offered to conduct them to the house. In their approach to the house, Mrs. Markland came forth to meet them.—She was a fair and comely woman, of an age suitable to that of the farmer; and, like her husband, had that primitive plainness of deportment, which, even to those who have seen the manners of courts, conveys an idea of dignity, because composed, recollected, and unembarrassed:—their civilities were not a barbarous mixture of rustic ignorance and an affectation of the factitious mode of behaviour of people in higher life, but the simple manners of their ancestors, in which they had been bred, and which custom had rendered natural to them.

Mrs. Markland bid a servant tell Mrs. Neville that Mr. and Mrs. Conway were come to see her, and conducted her guests into a large old-fashioned parlour, whose floor
and

and furniture had the polish of domestic neatness.

They said something to the good respectable matron in praise of her daughter.

“ You honour her much,” she returned.
—“ She has been a great deal in the world ;
“ and it is long, very long, since I saw her,
“ till she came down this summer to us.—
“ We find her still humble, and kind, and
“ dutiful, as when she first left us ; but she
“ is not the same in other respects ;—her
“ health, her spirits are gone ! My girl,
“ when she left us, was like the gayest bird
“ that flies :—I am afraid, but I dare not
“ ask her questions, for she always shifts the
“ subject.—I am afraid she has not the best
“ husband ;—but she never complains ; she
“ has not a heart that will bear much un-
“ kindness,—her constitution is already bro-
“ ken ; and I fear her heart will soon follow.
“ Lady Wittington, to be sure, has fre-
“ quently written to us to tell us how happily
“ our daughter was settled, and to express
“ her pleasure at it :—but alas ! our child
“ says

“ says nothing, but that she is content. Per-
 “ haps you may know him, madam,” said
 she to Mrs. Conway, “ and can tell us
 “ how he behaves, for we have never seen
 “ him;—we may, perhaps, do him an in-
 “ justice—but we have heard that men in the
 “ gay world act in a manner, and think no-
 “ thing of it, that would break my poor
 “ girl’s heart. Why did we ever part with
 “ her!—but we thought it was for the best.
 “ —I know she is not happy, for the other
 “ day she plucked a large bunch of cypress,
 “ and placed two or three of the smallest rose
 “ buds she could find in the midst of it;—
 “ she sighed, and said it was emblematic of
 “ her life. I did not understand her at the
 “ time, but afterwards, when we were look-
 “ ing at her paintings, she told us that cy-
 “ press signified *mourning*, and roses *plea-*
 “ *sure*; and *small* were the buds that she
 “ placed among the cypress she wore in her
 “ bosom.”

The company avoided giving the good
 woman pain, by saying they had not long
 had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Neville,
 and

and were not intimate enough to have seen any thing of her domestic situation. The conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Neville, who entered with that quiet ease which distinguished her deportment. She expressed her pleasure at seeing them, and then they entered into an agreeable conversation.

Lady Gaythorne seemed delighted with the situation of the house, and drawing a chair opposite the window that commanded a beautiful prospect of a romantic country, with the Avon stealing along at the bottom of the hill on which the house stood ; “ I “ could live here for ever,” said she, affecting a tone of enthusiasm.

Needham smiled, and leaning over the back of her chair, “ I remember,” said he, “ Sterne somewhere says, that the expression “ *the world*, frequently means only the little “ circle in which a man moves, and is often “ used (when he speaks of the observations “ made on his actions) by him who never “ goes beyond the smoke of his own little vil-
“ lage,

“lage, as by him whose deeds or whose ta-
 “lents have extended his fame to distant
 “climes. In my opinion the expression
 “*for ever* is often as ridiculously applied.
 “The coxcomb, who having received an en-
 “couraging billet from his mistress, protests
 “he will preserve it *for ever*;—means, till
 “it is worn out by being constantly carried
 “in his pocket, and boastfully shewn to eve-
 “ry one he meets. When a notable lady
 “says she has bought a gown that will last
 “*for ever*, she only means the term of a few
 “months: and when a town lady declares
 “she could look at a prospect *for ever*, she
 “means, I should presume, for *ten mi-
 “nutes*.

“We shall be able to judge of your lady-
 “ship’s idea of *for ever*, when we have the
 “pleasure of paying Mrs. Neville an after-
 “noon visit,” cried Mrs. Conway.” Mrs.
 “Neville bowed and said, she hoped they
 “would do her that honour very soon.”

“Oh, I should like better than any thing
 “in the world, to come here this evening,”
 returned

returned Lady Gaythorne : “ —are you
“ otherwise engaged, Mrs. Neville ?

Mrs. Neville assured her ladyship she was
disengaged, and should rejoice in the honour
of seeing them. It was then agreed that they
should take their tea at Mr. Markland’s

“ We can then,” said Mr. Conway, “ shew
“ to Sir Harry and Lady Gaythorne a spot
“ at the distance of two or three fields from
“ this house, worthy of observation, as be-
“ ing the birth-place of the inimitable Butler,
“ author of *Hudibras*. Stratford has been
“ eternized for giving birth to Shakespeare ;
“ and, had I a pen that could give immor-
“ tality, the little village of Strensham should
“ live for ever.

“ Is there any thing curious in the house
“ itself ?” asked Lady Gaythorne.

“ Nothing at all,” replied Mrs. Neville,
“ it is a low-roofed, thatched cottage, which
“ was the property of Butler’s father :—a
“ piece of ground that belongs to it is still
“ called

“ called Butler’s Close. I visited the little
 “ dwelling this morning, for the first time
 “ since my childhood, with a high degree
 “ of enthusiastic pleasure. A poor cottager
 “ lives in one part of it; the other is unin-
 “ habited, and quite out of repair. The
 “ largest room is a tolerable sized kitchen.
 “ *Here*, (thought I, as I stood beside the
 “ fire place, looking at some old brick-work,
 “ which sufficiently spoke the antiquity of
 “ the building) *Here* sat, after the labours of
 “ a toilsome day, the respectable yeoman;
 “ —*there* the contented companion of his
 “ industry. Imagination instantly painted
 “ a groupe of happy faces in each of the
 “ wide-extended, social chimney corners:
 “ the principal figure stands forward with a
 “ boldness of relief that rivets attention; not
 “ distinguished by outward garb, or high-
 “ bred graces: but by the flexible features
 “ of genuine humour, and the sparkling
 “ glances of pointed wit. The moral tale
 “ goes round; the ‘ crackling faggot blazes
 “ on the chearful hearth.’ I listen to the
 “ arch commentaries of the youthful satirist
 “ on the little transactions of the village;
 G “ the

“ the comic allusions that fall from him in
“ language, quaint, yet picturesque ! I see
“ the ludicrous, the vivid images his sportive
“ fancy raises ! and I feel the little dome
“ shake with the unrestrained burst of rustic
“ laughter ! A pensive traveller, who has
“ forsaken the spot where he gave to the
“ tomb the remains of a beloved partner,
“ and is rambling to dissipate a gloom bor-
“ dering upon despair, approaches — He
“ feels for the first time since that sad event,
“ his heart accord to the tones of hilarity ;
“ and by an involuntary motion checks the
“ reins of his horse : he is dubious of the
“ road he ought to take, in order to reach a
“ place of abode for the night. He dis-
“ mounts to make inquiries, — and whilst he
“ fastens his horse to the little wicket in the
“ hedge which fences the cottage from the
“ high road, experiences a pleasure long un-
“ known to his breast, in the thought of
“ looking in upon a groupe of joyous coun-
“ tenances. I don’t know how far I should
“ have pursued the idea, had not a little
“ girl I had with me, who, poor child, saw
“ nothing but a fireless hearth, an unpaved
“ floor,

“ floor, and bare walls, by asking me how
 “ much longer I meant to continue in that
 “ dirty place, awaked me from my reve-
 “ rie.”

“ Oh, I shall like to go extremely ; but I
 “ am afraid I shall see no such visions,” cried
 Lady Gaythorne. They soon after took
 their leave and departed.

In returning they were overtaken by a
 shower of rain, as they were crossing a wide
 field ; and in order to shelter themselves, ran
 into a little shed, built for the herdsmen to re-
 treat to in bad weather. Here they had not
 long been before Mrs. Williams and her two
 daughters came up : the gentlemen instantly
 surrendered their places to them, and endured
 the beating of the storm under a hedge.

C H A P. XIV.

WHILST the Williams stood here, they heard, to their infinite mortification, that the family from Conway park had been visiting Mrs. Neville. As soon as the storm was over they took leave, and pursued their different walks : but the pride of Miss Williams had received a deep wound, and she said to her mother as they returned home ;
“ I am astonished the creature could have
“ the effrontery to invite such a person as
“ Lady-Gaythorne to drink tea at a farm
“ house— but some peoples assurance carries
“ all before it ; for people that are polite,
“ can’t tell how to refuse their bold requests.
“ —Mama, I think after this, you cannot
“ scruple to invite them to your house.”
“ Why,

“Why, truly, Anne,” said she, “if former Markland can take the liberty of asking Sir Harry and Lady Gaythorne, to drink tea with them, I think we may : and I am sure Mrs. Conway would far prefer visiting us.”

“Yes, indeed, mama, I think we may ; but now we know they have visited her, it will look as if we imitated her, to ask them to drink tea : I should like for them to dine with us : that would shew we are of more consequence.—To be able to give a dinner to Sir Harry and Lady Gaythorne, would give us quite an eclat.”

“Lord ! child,” replied the mother, but “great people have every thing in such a stile, that we shall look quite shabby and mean.”

“Oh, never fear, mama : Colonel Morgan’s housekeeper will lend us any thing we may want to set off the table ; and we can have John Mason’s son to wait and that little green coat of Jack’s (which is

“ laid by because he has out grown it) will
“ do for Nick Mason to wear for the day ve-
“ ry well ; and I can find a bit of red cloth
“ somewhere in the house to tack on for a
“ collar and cuffs ; and with the red waist-
“ coat he has got of his own, we can make
“ him look very spruce.”

“ Lord ! child, but he is such a queer-
“ looking lank-haired numps.”

The motion of Miss Anne was received with approbation ; and it was agreed nem. con. to send an invitation that very evening. A messenger was immediately dispatched to the next town to purchase some dinner cards : in the interval, Miss Anne busied herself in facing the little green coat : and having no red thread in the house, she made use of some blue, which, if it did not add to the neatness of the garment, certainly contributed to make that variety, which is allowed to be the soul of ornament. By the time the boy returned, the coat was ready for him to put on, in which he was ordered immediately to equip himself, and not to forget to shake
shake

shake the flour-box over his head. Mean-
while Miss Anne adorned his hat with a yellow button, and a bit of tarnished gold lace; which having performed, she sat down, and after spoiling several cards, at last compleated one, and sent Nicholas with it, ordering him to return with all possible expedition, as no time was to be lost in making the necessary preparations.

The door of Mr Conway's house was open-
by Sir Harry's French valet, who much diverted with the figure of the boy, could hardly take the card from him without laughing; but, checking his risibility whilst he surveyed the marks of some fullers earth, which had been rubbed upon the coat, in order to discharge the grease, and which had not sufficiently dried to be brushed off clean:

“ Ah ! monsieur, said he, you have had
“ un little tomber in de dirt—come you wid
“ me.”

So saying he carried him to the rest of the
servants, who no sooner saw poor little Nick

Mason so metamorphosed, than they burst into an universal laugh : not being able to stand this, the boy took to his heels and ran off.

The moment the family at the parsonage set their eyes upon him, they cried as with one voice, “ Where is the card ? ”

“ I have brought no card,” replied Nick ;
“ they were not at home, so I know not
“ whether they will come or not ; but how-
“ ever, this I know, if they laugh as main-
“ ly at poor folks when they be dressed up a
“ bit as their servants do, their room is bet-
“ ter than their company.”

The Williams were astonished, and somewhat disconcerted at the expressions of the boy ; in which state we request to leave them for the present, and return to the Conways and their visitors.

[C H A P. XV.

"I DON'T know when I have made a
" more agreeable visit," said Mrs. Conway,
as the little party seated themselves after re-
turning from Mr. Markland's, " the pleas-
" ing conversation of Mrs. Neville, the in-
" terestingness of her appearance in a straw
" hat and linen gown, the unaffected sim-
" plicity with which we were entertained by
" the good old people, the cleanly looks of
" the rosy servant who waited at tea and
" served us with the delicate fruits and cream,
" the order and cleanliness of every thing
" in the house, and the quietness and regu-
" larity with which every one seemed to be
" following their avocations as we walk-
" ed through the simple dwelling, gave a
G 5 " picture

“ picture of respectable industry that inspired the most pleasing sensations,”

“ Oh, I was charmed,” drawled out lady Gaythorne in an affected tone, “ there was something in the whole extremely nouvelle.”

“ And, did you really enjoy it, Charlotte ?” said Sir Harry.

“ Oh, intirely,” said she.

“ What cards are these,” said Mrs. Conway, chancing to cast her eyes on the chimney piece : — “ From Mrs. Williams : — “ Will it be agreeable to your ladyship to “ accept the invitation ?”

“ Oh, by all means,” said she. And Mrs. Conway immediately di’patched an answer, which communicated no small delight to the Williams’s family, — who had been on the rack of anxiety to know how their invitation would be received.

When

When the hour of visiting arrived, in spite of the previous command and menaces of their mother, the five younger children of the Williams could not help popping their heads out of the upper windows, like pigeons peeping from their holes.

The dress of Lady Gaythorne, which rose to the extreme point of the fashion, struck a kind of awe into the two elder daughters, who, with their mother, were ready to receive them. Little conversation passed before dinner, for Miss Anne and her sister were so overpowered by the glitter of Lady Gaythorne's appearance that she could not become collected enough, for some time, to start any subject, or to join in any one that was begun; and Mrs. Williams, on her part, was incessantly making excursions to the kitchen to give directions concerning, and to inspect the cookery that was going forward. Her husband endeavoured to supply her place, but he gave them pain by the anxiety which they plainly perceived in his countenance lest his family should render themselves ridiculous by ill-conducting the entertainment.

tainment. The boy, at last appeared with the first dish, the wildness of his eyes, his trepidation, his shabby livery, and awkward gait, were so truly ludicrous, that their visitors could hardly refrain from laughing. The dinner consisted of unnecessary variety of provisions, very ill dressed, and from the want of attendants, and the scarcity of utensils, very ill-served up. The poor lad, in his hurry to give Lady Gaythorne a glass of wine, spilled it on her apron ; but as she did not seem to feel any concern at the accident, Mrs. Williams bore it with christian meekness, giving him but a short reprimand ; which, considering she excelled more in the flowery and diffuse stile of eloquence, than in the laconic, was rather surprising ;—but, upon his letting half a dozen beautiful china plates fall out of his hands, she was mistress of no such forbearance, for this accident touched her dearly ; they were all of them borrowed, and she must of necessity replace them at a considerable expence. Mr. Williams, and Miss Anne in vain begged her to be calm : her choler was roused, and she could not refrain from venting it upon the
poor

poor trembling boy; who heartily wished himself out of the green jacket and quietly following the plough. When the torrent would have ceased we know not, had not a sudden outcry like that of children whom some accident had befallen (and which seemed to proceed from an out-house) alarmed them. Sir Harry, who sat next the window, which was but a short step from the ground, popped out and opened the door of the place from whence the sound had issued; and displayed to the company, who had by this time gone forth much terrified, the cause of the terrible howling they had heard, which was, two or three of Mrs. Williams's children, who had been locked up there, one of whom in trying to get out, had bruised his fingers with the door; this afforded a new subject for the eloquence of Mrs. Williams, who called instantly for the cook (as she stiled the woman whom they had called in to assist them in dressing the victuals) and the other maid. Only the cook appeared, however, of whom she demanded who had locked up the children in that strange place; and why they

they had not been left in the nursery with the rest ?

“ Lord bleſs your heart, Madam,” returned the woman, who, fixed at the haughty manner in which Mrs. Williams interrogated, “ why, what could I do ? Deuce a bit “ would they ſtay in the chamber along with “ the big ones, for they makes it a rule always to plague the little ones ; and there “ they were under my feet or in the dripping pan every minute.—So I took and “ put them in there out of the way.”

“ But, Dolly ought to have minded them, “ mama,” ſaid Miſs Williams, for what “ could ſhe have to do,—when we have “ a footboy to wait at table.”

“ Lord keep you, Miſs,” replied the woman, “ the poor girl has had enough to do, “ what with running here and there, and “ having the children bawling and ſqualling “ about her ears ; and it’s as much as ever “ ſhe

“ she can do to keep ’em out of the parlour.”

Miss Anne, who stood upon thorns, and was in the most terrible state of mortification, desired the woman to take all the children into the nursery, and tell Dolly to take care of them.

“ Why, Miss,” said the woman, who was much irritated at the commanding and inconsiderate language of Miss Anne, “ I’ll tell her so to do, when she comes back ; but she is gone to try to borrow some plates, in lieu of those Nick broke.”

The company could not help pitying the awkward situation of the Williams, who uttered a thousand apologies to their guests for their having been so disagreeably disturbed, and delivered many invectives against servants as they returned to the parlour

But scarcely had they reseated themselves at table, and Mrs. Williams put her knife into a currant tart, before a violent rumbling
over

over head like the noise of thunder, alarmed them all —— Lady Gaythorne startled, fell back in her seat, and seemed to faint. Whilst some were employed in recovering the fainting lady, others ran up stairs to the chamber from whence the noise came, which was used as a lumber room, and for the children to play in during wet weather, or when Mrs. Williams received company. Here they beheld five or six children wheeling in an old broken coach about the room.

The gentlemen turned the matter off with a laugh at the oddity of the accident ; and Mrs. Conway, with the kindest tone of voice in the world, said she was delighted “ the little creatures had not hurt themselves.”

But not so spoke Lady Gaythorne, whose nerves were so totally deranged by the successive hurries they had undergone, that as soon as the cloth was removed, she begged them to excuse her leaving them, saying she was so ill as to be unable to stay longer, and requested Sir Harry to order the carriage. Mrs. Conway insisted, as she was so ill, to accompany her home.

C H A P.

C H A P. XVI.

WHEN they came home Lady G—
 retired to her own apartment to compose her-
 self; and Matilda amused herself with the
 children till the gentlemen returned. When
 they entered, Mrs. Conway told Sir Harry,
 that Lady Gaythorne was gone to endeavour
 to get a little sleep, and that she believed she
 was not stirring. He soon after went out of
 the room, as did Needham; when Matilda
 said to Mr. Conway, “I was quite distressed
 “to be obliged to leave the Williams imme-
 “diately after that ridiculous accident; for
 “it must hurt poor Mrs. Williams extreme-
 “ly, to think the troublesomeness of her chil-
 “dren drove her visitors away; but it was
 “impossible for me to avoid insisting upon
 “attending

“ attending the sick lady home ;—for my
“ part, I confess I thought the scene had
“ infinitely more of the comic than the tra-
“ gic in it.”

“ People view things,” returned Conway,
“ in different lights, according to the vari-
“ ous casts of their minds. I declare, I real-
“ ly think it might take the effect it ap-
“ parently had on lady Gaythorne, upon
“ almost any woman who had no taste for
“ humour, and was unused to see occurren-
“ ces of the kind.”

“ Well,” replied Matilda, “ truth obliges
“ me to confess, I think her terrors were
“ wholly assumed ; but, admitting them to
“ be real, ought she not in politeness, in good
“ nature, to have endeavoured to have con-
“ cealed them from the parties concerned,
“ who she must perceive were in a very piti-
“ able situation ?”

“ Indeed, Matilda, I think you judge the
“ actions of Lady Gaythorne too severely.”

“ Good

“ Good Heavens ! Mr. Conway, I could
“ never have thought to have heard you the
“ defender of affectation.”

“ Nor do you at present, Matilda,” re-
plied Conway ; “ but supposing her lady-
“ ship’s illness to be really assumed, you are
“ certainly too partial in your strictures.
“ Do not the foolish attempts of the Williams
“ equally entitle them to the reproach of
“ ridiculous affectation, of what is entirely
“ out of their power to appear !”

“ Yes ; but my pity for their narrow cir-
“ cumstances made me refrain from com-
“ menting on their folly.”

“ But then, should not your pity for the
“ wrong education of this young woman
“ have induced you to have thrown the same
“ kind veil over her defects ?

“ There was a time,” said Matilda, when
“ you were of my opinion, and when you
“ thought that——”

“ Yes,”

“ Yes, interrupted he, “ but that was
 “ before I had reflected on the disadvantages
 “ she had laboured under ; before I had seen
 “ several turns in her mind, which, shining
 “ through the ravages of dissipation, have
 “ proved to me that she has naturally an
 “ amiable heart.”

“ I have done, Conway,” said Matilda,
 “ nor will I ever attempt to argue the matter
 “ further; for I see you do not wish to be
 “ convinced of what appears to me perfectly
 “ clear.”

“ I am astonished, Matilda,” said Mr.
 Conway ; “ I never before saw you so slow
 “ to be convinced of an error ; nor so quick
 “ to see the faults of another.”

“ Nor do I ever recollect the time,” re-
 plied she, “ when our opinions of any
 “ person were so different, so widely diffe-
 “ rent ; or when you were so inclined to put
 “ an unkind construction on my sentiments
 “ when in the flow of an open temper I gave
 “ them

“ them language to you, whom I consider
“ as my second self.”

“ Good God ! you make the matter quite
“ serious,” said Mr. Conway.

“ You have, indeed, given me a wound,”
replied Matilda ; “ and I have not dissimu-
“ lation enough to hide it.”

So saying, the tears springing to her eyes,
she walked hastily out of the room. Conway
would have endeavoured to have detained
her, but as she quitted the parlour, Lady
Gaythorne, who had been walking in the
garden, passed by the window, and in a mo-
ment came into the house, and entered to
him immediately.

C H A P. XVII.

LADY Gaythorne had just parted from Needham, who had been inquiring with great anxiety if her ladyship was better.

“ I am better, Mr. Needham,” replied she, “ though not quite recovered —but
“ for Heaven’s sake, did you get out of that
“ house before part of it fell upon you ?—
“ for I am sure I expected such an accident
“ every moment to take place :—how can
“ the people exist with such eternal riots
“ about their ears ?”

“ We got away by good fortune,” replied he, “ with unbroken bones ;—but it called
“ for all our fortitude to endure the disagree-
“ able scene after your ladyship went.”

“ Lord,

“ Lord, Mr. Needham, what could I have
“ done ?”

{ Needham knew that there is nothing re-
commends us so much to a person bent upon
any particular scheme, as judiciously insinu-
ating that the end they wished for is likely
to be obtained, and he instantly replied ;

“ I believe there were those in company
“ who could not feel any thing disagreeable
“ while your ladyship was present.”

“ I must bow to you, Mr. Needham, for
“ that compliment ; for I must conclude you
“ mean yourself : for Sir Harry, you know,
“ has been married an age ; and Mr. Con-
“ way is still in love with his wife.”

“ Is he ?” said Needham, with a signifi-
cant look.

“ Yes, indeed,” replied she, “ Sir Harry
“ told me so ; and I am sure I think she is a
“ pretty kind of a woman, and very amiable.”

“ Yes,

“ Yes, but neither goodness nor beauty,” replied Needham, “ are loadstones able
“ to fix the eccentric affections of men edu-
“ cated in such principles as are the youth
“ of our days ; and living amidst the seduc-
“ tive examples of a licentious age.”

He had time to add no more, for just then they were joined by Sir Harry ; but he had said enough to give a ground for the imagination of Lady Gaythorne to paint upon, and to inflate her vanity.

On Sir Harry telling her the evening air was too cold for her to remain out of doors, she returned to the house, and entered it, as we have before related, just as Matilda quitted the parlour.

Conway approached, and with that soft air of politeness which was peculiar to himself, asked if she had intirely got the better of her hurry of spirits.

“ Tolerably recovered, I thank you,” said she, throwing herself upon a seat ; “ but was
“ not

“not that Mrs. Conway I saw as I came in
“with her handkerchief at her eyes? Is she
“unwell, or any of the family? She has
“very weak spirits, has she not? for I very
“often see her look melancholy.”

“Of late, I think she has,” replied Conway.

“I hope she has no particular reason,”
“said Lady Gaythorne.

“I think not,” said Conway; “she is
“an amiable creature; but we are all of us
“apt to be a little low spirited, and to have
“imaginary ills sometimes.”

“I am sure,” returned her ladyship, it is
“impossible she can fancy any thing to give
“her a moment’s uneasiness respecting you;
“for I think of all the people I have ever
“seen, you are the most indulgent husband.”—Conway bowed.

“Your ladyship does me too much honour; I pretend not to a faultless temper.”

H

“Oh,

“ Oh, then it was with you she was displeased? Was it? Sure that must be an imaginary grievance?”

“ No indeed; it is most probable I was in the wrong.”

“ How generous is that—so then, I find even you who marry for love have disagreements sometimes—and is Mrs. Conway equally liberal? Would she vindicate you, and blame her own conduct to a third person, were she led to say any thing on the subject?”

“ Yes, if on recollection she thought she had been in the least degree to blame, I think she would: of this I am certain, she would never complain of my conduct.”

“ Never complain!” reiterated Lady Gaythorne; “ Lord, I think it is a great relief to complain—I hardly think she or any woman would deny herself the relief of complaining, if she had an idea the person

“ person to whom she spoke had understand-
“ ing and prudence.”

“ I do believe Matilda would so act, or she
“ must have changed her nature.”

“ Oh ! you are too nice ; for my part I
“ think there is nothing in it. For instance,
“ if one took it into one’s head one’s hus-
“ band did not pay the same attention as
“ usual, I don’t perceive there would be any
“ thing wrong in mentioning it to a person
“ whom I thought had a real friendship for
“ me, and who had discretion, as we would
“ mention any other little observation we
“ make.—So Mr. Needham said to me but
“ this minute in the garden : I happened to
“ be speaking of you, and remarking how
“ happy I thought you and Mrs. Conway
“ were in each other. He observed, that
“ there was no beauty or merit, however
“ great, that would fix the inconstant heart
“ of man for ever ; and that he did not be-
“ lieve you were more proof against the
“ charms of novelty than another.”

“ Did Needham say so ?” cried he hastily ;
“ from what motive could he be led so to ex-
“ press himself ? Matilda could not have
“ dropped to him any of those little expres-
“ sions of anxiety which she has of late hint-
“ ed to me—It cannot be.

“ Good heavens ! I’m sure I did not say
“ he told me Mrs. Conway said any thing
“ to him about the matter ; it was only his
“ own observation.”

“ I shall enquire his reason for making
“ it,” said Conway.

“ No, for Heaven sake, don’t—what a
“ thoughtless creature I am ! I dare say he
“ only meant it as a general remark ; I pray
“ you, Mr. Conway, not to mention it to
“ him ; he may think I told it you with an
“ ill natured design of making mischief,
“ and it was by one of the greatest chances
“ in the world that I remembered it. Our
“ talking on the subject brought it into my
“ head.”

She

She said this with an air of earnestness, and with that naiveté which she knew well how to assume, and which was her most imposing artifice.

“ I will not speak of it,” he at length replied, “ as your ladyship so earnestly requests it ;—but I cannot think—Matilda—perhaps—but—well, however, we will talk no more on the subject.”

“ Nor think any more of it, will you ?” asked she, involuntarily, to appearance, laying her hand on his arm with an anxious vivacity, in the motion which was really graceful and insinuating. It is a fact, that we never show to so much advantage as in the presence of those whom we believe to have a prepossession in our favour, especially if to this consciousness is added the desire of pleasing : the heart is then dilated, the features are illumined by good humour, the whole figure is unembarrassed, and in readiness to assist by the charms of graceful motion, the eloquence of the tongue.

“ But is your ladyship,” said Conway,
“ really of opinion that it would not be un-
“ kind to mention the little starts of humour,
“ the caprices, of the being one loves above
“ all others, to a third person ?”

“ Perhaps I should think as you do, had
“ my lot been like yours.”

She said this with an appearance of melan-
choly and regret, that touched the prepossess-
ed imagination of Conway; to whom she
had often insinuated that her heart had given
him the preference to any one-else.

“ Good God !” said he mentally, “ why
“ was not such a heart fated to chuse its
“ counterpart ?”

I know not whether it was the effect of ac-
cident or penetration, that led Lady Gay-
thorne to hit upon the right method of apply-
ing to the vulnerable part of Conway’s mind.
The heart of Conway was one of the best in
the world; his understanding was of a very
superior order; and his judgment of books,
and

and the arts of design, shewed the fineness of his taste. His person might have served as a model for a statuary or painter; but though his manners were highly polished and full of delicacy, there was a native dignity, and a graceful simplicity in the latter, that precluded the most distant idea of effeminacy. But as Pope observes, speaking of the difficulty of developing characters by external appearances,

“Unthought of frailties cheat us in the wife.”

Under all these manly graces, there was at bottom a weakness, which has been generally stiled womanish, but which is certainly by no means peculiar to either sex. Conway could not, possessing them so eminently, but be sensible of those gifts and accomplishments which so readily conciliated to him the affection of all with whom he conversed, and which particularly recommended him to the women. He was somewhat too conscious of them: a sensibility of heart that was ever alive to the soft and the beautiful, made him susceptible of too high a pleasure from the ap-

probation of the other sex; and though his vanity on this subject had not led him into actions decidedly criminal, it had often influenced him to the commission of smaller errors, which on reflection he never thought of but with regret.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



FEATURES FROM LIFE;

OR,

A SUMMER VISIT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

GEORGE BATEMAN, AND MARIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FEATURES FROM LIFE;

OR,

A SUMMER VISIT.

C H A P. I.

MATILDA went directly, on leaving the parlour, to her own room, her heart full of inquietude. A perfect integrity, humanly speaking, formed the basis of Matilda's character. Her understanding, naturally clear and comprehensive, had been cultivated to a high degree of elegant refinement, which, though it sometimes increased her pleasures, more frequently augmented her griefs, and
was



was indeed the spring from whence they often solely flowed. Her heart, in that season of life when imagination adorns with its most brilliant tints the objects on which it delights to dwell, giving a keener edge to all our passions, had yielded itself to one, who estimated the possession of it as the highest and most honourable prize in the wheel of fortune.

The similarity of Conway's pursuits, his temper, his understanding, to Matilda's, and his unremitting attention to her happiness, had made the few years they had lived together roll on in such a state of tranquil pleasure, that Mrs. Conway could not sometimes, when she compared her own situation with that of others, help recurring to an expression of Dr. Young :

All more than common menaces an end.

And a dread would at times arise, lest the loss of any part of his affection, which made all the happiness of her life should throw an endless gloom over the then vivid scene.

Conway

Conway had hitherto, she remarked to herself, let him have differed ever so much with her in matters of opinion, always retained a firm belief in the uprightness of her intentions, whatever he might think of her judgment in the particular from which he dissented. She now thought she perceived the colour of her fate beginning to change; she fancied he now began to put the most unfavourable constructions on her conduct, and to blame her for the very actions for which he had often commended her. All those horrors which a lively imagination knows to raise, when any thing appears to have lessened the regard of those to whom it is attached, took possession of her mind.

In this disposition it was that she quitted the parlour, after the conversation I have related, betwixt Conway and her. The moment she entered her own chamber, she flung herself on her knees, and gave full vent to her tears—"Let me die—let me die, "merciful heaven," cried she; "cut me off, if it be thy will, in the midst of happiness;

“ piness ; but in thine infinite goodness avert
“ from me the sight of his indifference !” In
this afflicted state she remained a long time,
till having given way to the violence of her
grief, it gradually subsided into a more tran-
quil state : and reflection in some degree re-
sumed its usual power over her mind.

“ After all,” said she, “ perhaps I do him
“ an injustice—perhaps I did speak with too
“ much asperity of Lady Gaytherne ? But
“ then I never before remember Conway re-
“ tort so sharply upon me. However, to
“ show that I resent his conduct, even if it
“ should spring from the motive I at first ima-
“ gined, will but accelerate the moment of
“ total indifference. No ! let me appear
“ with a brow devoid of suspicion, nor im-
“ itate him by sullenness, reserve, or com-
“ plaints, to seek for the smiles, and the
“ loves, in any face but her’s who has so
“ long looked to his *will* as the law of her
“ actions, to his *love* as her only hope of fe-
“ licity in this state of being.” After these
reflections she went, with a heart somewhat
more composed, to the nursery ; she kissed
with

with maternal tenderness each of her children; but on the face of little Henry, which beamed forth the soul of his father, she could not refrain from dropping a tear, inspired by more impassioned feelings. By these effusions she had much lightened her heart before she reached the parlour, which she approached with a soul, though pensive, full of benevolence and kindness to every human creature.

But we confess a little of this tranquility gave way, when on opening the door she saw Lady Gaythorne and Conway seated together, with that sort of expression in their looks that denoted they had been deeply engaged in conversation. She exerted herself to hide, and to suppress this emotion; but a chillness, and a sinking at her heart, discovered to her that she had not philosophised away the feelings with which she had quitted the room.

Mrs. Conway, however, enquired with politeness respecting her Ladyship's indisposition; and before this subject of conversation ended, Needham and Sir Henry entered.

“ Well,

“ Well, Mr. Needham,” cried Matilda, attempting to hide her design under an air of liveliness ; “ Did any new disaster arise after we left you ? ”

“ Nothing at all worth relating after what you saw, madam.”

“ They have quite overcome their mortification then, I hope.”

“ Oh ! yes, entirely ; for before we came away, they were talking of going to the review, to-morrow.”

“ Lord ! ” said Lady Gaythorne, “ I dare say that was because we spoke of it, you know, and said we intended going.”

“ Very probable,” said Needham, that might increase their desire of going — Mr. Williams has promised to send for a chaise to carry them to the field.”

“ Well, I am heartily rejoiced we came away before they talked of their expedition,
“ on,

“on, for perhaps we should have been
“obliged to have asked some of them to have
“gone with us ;and I am sure, another day
“spent with any part of that family, would
“infallibly remove me from this state of ex-
“istence.”

As Sir Harry and Mr. Conway said they should go on horse-back, Mrs. Conway observed, they could then make room for Mrs. Neville in the carriage, if it was agreeable to Lady Gaythorne.” “Oh ! by all means, madam ; I am sure she is a very quiet agreeable person.” Mrs. Conway accordingly sent the next morning, to let Mrs. Neville know that if she would do them the favour of accompanying them, they would call upon her, and take her to the review. To this invitation they received a note from Mrs. Neville, expressing her concern that she was engaged to go with another party.

The case was this, the Williams's, who (though they had been mortified to the quick by seeing Mrs. Neville so much caressed by the Conways, &c. and longed for an opportunity

tunity of teasing her), were not so blind to their own interest, but they could do some violence to their feelings when that was concerned. And this motive suggested to them, that it might recommend them to Mrs. Conway, to behave with a degree of respect to Mrs. Neville, and that a contrary conduct might disgust her. As they had owned at Mrs. Conway's, that Miss Williams had been at the same school with Mrs. Neville, it was resolved unanimously, " that they should
" visit her, and tell her, they did not recol-
" lect her person the evening they met her
" at Mrs. Conway's ; and, that they had ne-
" ver heard her name mentioned since she
" had changed it ; but, that the moment
" they were informed she was Miss Mark-
" land, Miss Williams's school fellow, they
" had determined to solicit the pleasure of a
" renewal of her acquaintance."

They accordingly went the next morning, and invited her to go to the review with them ; with a previous resolution, however, that if she accepted their offer, they would do all in their power to wound her pride and
her

her sensibility when they got her amongst them, to make themselves amends for going to seek her acquaintance, which they thought an humiliation.

But to return to the conversation :—" Well, " Mr. Needham," said Matilda, I hope " you will now no longer plead, that folly " reigns with greater power among the " higher, than the middle class of people, " but will confess that every station has its " own follies."

" But the follies of the Williamss are not " the follies of their station, Madam; they " are follies copied from the destructive ex- " amples of higher life; where we see a man " of a thousand a year, imitating in his dress, " in his house, in his stile of living, the man " of five thousand." " Most truly said," " cried Matilda; " let my fortune be what " it will, may my establishment never ex- " ceed it."

" One might discover, Madam," returned Sir Harry, " that you had been lately in " town,

“ town, by your having adopted the fashion-
“ nable phrase *establistment*. For ever since
“ the Prince of Wales has had an establisth-
“ ment, every prim maiden gentlewoman,
“ who can just afford to keep a male and fe-
“ male servant, has talked of her *establistb-*
“ *ment* ; ’tis almost as ANNOYING, as was
“ the foolish phrase, *bore*, which that
“ lively dramattick writer, Mrs. Cowley, has
“ now almost driven out of the town.”

“ I understand your allusion,” said Need-
“ ham, “ the expression, *bore*, has given
“ place to one equally disgusting ; for the
“ soul of folly is immortal, though the form
“ in which it appears is eternally changing.
“ A young man of fashion, with whom I
“ was conversing a day or two before I left
“ town, told me, he had been riding in
“ Hyde Park the whole of the morning, and
“ that he found the dust and the sun *annoying*
“ to the last degree ; he had met Lady
“ Bridget Sparkle, who had done nothing
“ but *annoy* him with an account of her own
“ repartees ; he longed to go out of town,
“ for now the parliament had broken up, he
“ should

“ should be *annoyed* to death with seeing every body leave it ; but, that he detested the idea of going into the country, for his father had insisted upon his spending the best part of the summer with him, and the old man was positively the greatest *annoyance* he knew in the world.”

“ What a strange Gothic creature you are,” said Lady Gaythorne, “ you approve nothing that other people do ; nothing that is fashionable ; I should like to have you punished, by being forced, this fine evening, to sit down to whist, and confined to the card table till morning appeared.”

“ That could be no punishment, were your ladyship likewise confined there.”

“ There is a compliment for you, Lady Gaythorne,” said Mr. Conway, “ your charms, you see, can make even an *Ape-manus* flatter.”

“ When

“ When Vulcan offered nectar to Venus,
“ the merry Gods laughed around,” cried
Sir Harry gaily.

“ Suppose we put his gallantry to the
“ test,” said Conway, touching the bell.
“ Pray do, pray do, Mr. Conway,” said
Lady Gaythorne, and he immediately rung
it.

Mrs. Conway who sat out, chanced to
place herself opposite to Needham, who, to
gratify Lady Gaythorne's wish, was her part-
ner, and who, to keep up their idea of his
dislike to cards, seemed to be endeavouring
to assume a satisfaction he did not feel : the
feint had a ludicrous effect when opposed to
the character he assumed, and much enter-
tained the whole company. They played
with spirit, but the fortune of the game turn-
ed against Needham ; he was rallied upon his
ill luck.

Matilda, from a wish of not appearing to
Conway low-spirited or out of temper, had
roused her spirits beyond their natural tone,
and

and there was a momentary wildness, an excess of gaiety in her countenance, whilst she overlooked the card table, that Conway remarked with surprise, and imputed to a wrong motive. He had never before seen her, after any dispute between them, so lively, so unembarrassed, or so soon appear to have forgotten their disagreement.—He was mortified that his want of temper had not power to make a longer impression on her mind. He recollected with disgust what Lady Gaythorne had said respecting Needham; and the thought started into his head, how strange soever it may seem to a dispassionate observer, that she had met him in the garden; had mentioned to him what had passed, and that he had advised her not to appear to be hurt by his behaviour, but to pique him by inattention. When we once admit suspicions injurious to those we love, into what fatal extremes do they sometimes hurry us! the bitterest malice of an enemy often do less injury.

Conway had fixed these thoughts so firmly in his head, that he began mentally to
comment

comment with infinite severity on the conduct of a woman, who could to a third person mention the faults of a husband she pretended to love, from any motive whatever, and agitated himself to that degree, that he knew not a card he played. When they were alone he took no notice of what had passed, but treated her with a coolness and reserve, that cut her to the heart. She chose not to renew the subject however, knowing that attempting to explain, or to remark upon, past disagreements, often served but to renew them and create fresh animosity, concluding, that if Conway's affection for her was still the same, his reserve would wear off of itself without a formal reconciliation.

In some positions of Conway's mind she would have hit upon a fortunate mode of conduct ; but in the present it was the worst she could have adopted. It gave strength to his suspicions.

When we consider how much man varies from himself at different periods of his existence, how vain appears the endeavour to
reduce

reduce the art of pleasing to a system. The random glance of an eye ; the casual movement of a feature, a soft inflexion of the voice, an epithet fortunately chosen, shall mock the laboured attempts of real affection, though guided by wisdom and virtue.

C H A P. II.

NEEEDHAM and Mrs. Conway happened to be the first who made their appearance in the breakfast-room the next morning. Whilst they waited for the assembling of the rest of the company, Mrs. Conway apologizing to Needham, called for pens and ink, in order to write a note : wanting a seal, and not having her watch about her, Needham begged her to make use of an antique engraved gem he wore on his finger. Having sealed her note, she took notice of the extreme beauty of the impression, and after looking on it some little time, returned it to Needham just as Conway happened to pass by the window. He saw them, engaged as he thought, in an earnest conversation :—

he

he was alarmed. "She has so high an opinion of his wisdom," said he, "she is certainly receiving his instructions how to act." With this idea, which gave a deep wound to his pride and his sensibility, he entered the room.

"Have the goodness," said Matilda, as he came in, "Mr. Needham, to shew the ring to Mr. Conway, he will be charmed with it." He looked at it. "You are very happy in being the possessor of so rare a gem, it has an infinity of merit." After holding it a few minutes in his hand, he returned it to Needham, with an air that shewed he declined conversation.

Just then entered to them Lady Gaythorne; Conway flew to place her in a chair, and when she had seated herself, he determined, as he thought Matilda had begun to assume indifference, to retaliate upon her.

He leant his arm over the back of her ladyship's chair, and enquired how she did, with an inflexion of voice of the most engag-



ing kind ; and, in order to amuse her, asked Needham for the ring, and began to comment on the excellency of the design and execution. This, though in itself no more than a common action, appeared in a stronger light to Matilda, when she contrasted it with the coldness and reserve in his manner, before Lady Gaythorne entered ; she thought it betrayed a design to pique her.

Lady Gaythorne seemed to enjoy these attentions, as proofs of her conquest, and, by a thousand little affectations, shewed her triumph.

Just at this instant it was that the servant returned, as I have before related, with a note from Mrs. Neville, declining the invitation to go with them to the review, having yielded to the excessive importunities of the Williams's.

“ You will not have the company of your favourite, she is pre-engaged,” said Mrs. Conway, turning to Needham.

“ Oh !

"Oh! I am sure Mr. Needham can never regret the absence of any one, when "Mrs. Conway is present," cried Lady Gaythorne.

There appeared in these words, to all but Mr. and Mrs. Conway, nothing more than a common-place compliment; and even they put different constructions upon them. The former supposed them to have reference to the conversation they had the preceding evening. The latter, as an expression of pique at her imagining any great addition could be made by Mrs. Neville, to the pleasure of any one of the male part of the company, when her Ladyship was of the party.

From several little hints of this kind, in the course of the day, Conway could not help suspecting, at some moments, that Lady Gaythorne knew, or at least conjectured, more than she had said to him, respecting Needham and Mrs. Conway.

The fear, however, of doing Matilda an injustice, made him overcome himself, so

far as to prevent him from leading to a conversation with her ladyship, that might give her room to apprehend (he believed Matilda capable of a mean and indelicate action.

They had company to dine with them that day, who staid till the evening, so that the Conways had little opportunity of conversing apart, till the family had retired for the night.

Matilda still maintained her resolution of not appearing to notice any alteration in Conway's behaviour, lest he should impute her remarks to jealousy. A conduct, which, though it sprung from the best motive in the world, was of all others the most powerfully calculated to keep alive the ideas Lady Gaythorne's suggestions had given birth to.

C H A P. III.

TH E day following they went to the review; Sir Harry and Mr. Conway on horseback, Needham with the ladies in the carriage. When they had been on the heath some little time, Needham looking out saw some person in a post-chaise at a distance bowing to them, he pointed out the chaise to Lady Gaythorne, and Mrs. Conway, they had no sooner returned one bow than another demanded an acknowledgment, and so on to the amount of six or seven.

“ Good God ! ” cried Needham, “ for
“ Heaven’s sake ! how many are there ? the
“ heads pop up one after another as unex-
“ pectedly as the children make their ap-
I 4 “ pearance,

“pearance, crawling out of the great Har-
“lequin leg in the pantomime of Robinson
“Crusoe.”—“It is the Williams’s,” cried
Mrs. Conway, “and I do believe I espy
“Mrs. Neville among them!—Poor thing,
“she must be fainting.—I wish we could re-
“lieve her from so terrible a situation.”

“I am really concerned for her,” said
Needham. “Lord,” cried Lady Gay-
thorne, “how could she trust herself
“amongst them?—I am sure if they had
“me in their power but one day, they’d ab-
“solutely petrify me to death.” “There
“would be no great danger of it,” returned
Needham, “if they put you in the midst
“of half a dozen of them in a post-chaise
“in the middle of summer.”

“Lord! Needham, what an oddity you
“are! Well then, they would suffocate me
“to death—something or other, I am sure,
“they would do, sufficient to put me out of
“the world.”

Just

Just then they saw some of the chaise ladies get out, and place themselves near the general, amongst whom was Mrs. Neville. After some time, "We could make room for your friend," said Lady Gaythorne, "but then it will be a shocking thing to take her from her company, will it not, Madam? And really having any one of that horrid family among us, would annoy us past all endurance."

"They must be very unreasonable indeed," said Mrs. Conway, "if they are offended at our relieving the poor Lady from so disagreeable a situation; for my own part, I would readily hazard their displeasure—but as the horses are from the carriage, how can we get to her? And, perhaps, if we send a servant, those people will persuade her to stay with them."—"I will go," said Mr. Needham, "with all my heart, if you think I can prevail upon her to come to you."

"He went, and presently returned, leading Mrs. Neville.

After they had seated themselves, and Mrs. Conway had enquired of Mrs. Neville, how she did, with the politest attention; Lady Gaythorne suddenly exclaimed, " Lord !
" Mrs. Neville, how could you venture
" yourself amongst those people ? are not
" you dead ? "

" When they came to make the invitation
" on," returned she, " I wished to have de-
" clined accepting it, for one or two reasons
" (though I did not then know the manner
" in which we were to be conveyed here),
" but they importuned me so strongly that
" my father thought it would give offence
" to them if I refused, and as he has a great
" esteem for Mr. Williams, I would not dis-
" please him by not accepting their apparent-
" ly civil request. When the chaise came
" to fetch me from the hill, there was only
" Miss Williams in it, and I had not the least
" idea of the number we were to take up at
" the Vicarage ; however, disagreeable and
" uncomfortable as was my situation amongst
" them, it was rendered worse by their con-
" versation, which consisted of a string of im-
" pertinent

“pertinent questions, which I dispensed
“them by not chusing to answer with any
“degree of communicative loquacity.”

On their return home, they had not proceeded above a quarter of a mile, before the coach was obliged to halt on account of a great croud on the road which obstructed its way, and surrounded a chaise which had broken down: inquiring into the matter, they found this to be the identical vehicle that had contained the Williams's, one or two of whom were much hurt. It was impossible for either of the ladies to make their way to them, but Mr. Needham got out, in order to give them what assistance might lay in his power. He came back to them in a few minutes, and told them he had found Mrs. Williams much hurt, as likewise one of her daughters; the rest, he said, were terribly frightened, but seemed more hurt by the sneers of the foot passengers (who diverted themselves with wondering how the family could all have squeezed themselves into the chaise) than at the situation of their mother and sisters. Mr. Conway and Mrs. Neville
seemed

seemed much concerned for the disagreeable and painful accident which had happened, notwithstanding their dislike to the people ; and Lady Gaythorne, after some minutes consideration, asked Needham if they were near any house in which they could stay till the carriage could return from taking home the Williams's ?

“ I see one at a few yards distance, by the road side,” said Needham.

“ Oh ! I cannot go there,” exclaimed Mrs. Conway, “ the next house, when we have passed that, I know will be open to us, but *that* is shut against *me*.”

Needham, who had been told her father would not see her, on account of her having married contrary to his inclinations, guessed immediately this to be the place of his residence, from the agitated manner in which she spoke, and after the Williams's had been put into the carriage, was for leading Lady Gaythorne to the house Mrs. Conway had recommended. But her Ladyship declared

clared she could not walk a step further than to the house in view without fainting away ; Mrs. Conway then said : “ There is a little “ bench hid amongst some shrubs in the front “ of the house, on which I will sit till the “ carriage returns, I shall be screened from “ the sun, and that is all I require : do you, “ Mr. Needham, conduct Lady Gaythorne “ to the house.” They opened the garden door, Matilda went and placed herself on the seat she had described, and Needham led Lady Gaythorne towards the building, an old fashioned mansion, which seemed to have belonged to a family of some consequence, and to which they approached by a long gravel walk.

Mr. Needham knocked at the door, and a maid-servant looked out at a window and demanded their business, whilst they could just espy the head of a man in a woollen night-cap peeping behind her. Mr. Needham, in as few words as possible told the accident that had happened, and requested admittance for the lady : at which the woman turned from the window and seemed to be
in

in conversation with the person behind the curtain. At length, however they heard a voice calling to the maid, who was then apparently descending the stairs, "Put
" them into the great parlour; and do you
" hear, mind that you open that window
" next the garden, lest those confounded
" window tax collectors should have any spy
" about."

At last the maid reached the hall-door, and having unlocked and unbolted it, they entered and were showed into a dark parlour, which, however, the servant soon illuminated by opening the window as her master had ordered her. Here they sat for some minutes, when the master of the house appeared to them, his head covered with a woollen night cap, his body cloathed in a long gown of green baize, belted with a leathern girdle.

When they entered into conversation, he inquired who the parties were who had been overturned, and on being told, the family of the Reverend Mr. Williams, he broke
out

out into the most violent invectives against them, accusing them of the most extreme extravagance, pride, folly, and dissipation, and did not scruple to pronounce their recent disaster a punishment inflicted on them by providence for their imprudent conduct and rage for amusement; for Mr. Seymour, though he had not for many years visited in the neighbourhood, knew the history and transactions of every family in it from his servant. "And after all," continued he, "this Mrs. Williams, I find, was formerly
 " only a servant; but women servants now-
 " a-days are the most extravagant wretches
 " in the world, for which reason I have
 " turned off all mine except one, and though
 " she is better than the generality, she is by
 " no means what I could wish her to be. Do
 " you know, it was but yesterday I came
 " upon her suddenly, and I found the hussy
 " washing her neck with oat-meal: yes, I
 " assure you, wasting as much oat-meal
 " about her fine white neck, forsooth, as
 " would have made messes of gruel for half
 " the poor people in the parish." Needham
 could not help smiling internally at some parts
 of

of this conversation, and to change the subject, said, " You seem, Sir, to have an extremely good house." " You shall see it if you please, Sir," returned he, and " some pictures which are esteemed excellent." Upon which he immediately conducted them up stairs, and calling the maid, they overheard him whisper her, to order the man who was working in the garden (for he did not keep a gardener to sleep in the house, in order to avoid paying the servant tax,) to go home for a little time and lock the gate of the garden in which the fruit was : " For if they should take it into their heads to walk there they'll expect me to offer them some fruit, and there is no occasion to give one's things away to strangers.

Needham and Mrs. Neville were too well amused, however, with the pictures, and Lady Gaythorne too languid for either of them, to wish to walk in the garden, till they were told the coach was come back ; when thanking Mr. Seymour for the reception he had given them they joined Mrs. Conway
and

and proceeded to the garden-gate, where the carriage waited for them.

“What pity it is,” said Lady Gaythorne
“when they were seated, “that old gentle-
“man makes such a horrid spectacle of him-
“self; he really looks like an old hermit just
“emerged from his cave. If he would go
“more into the world and dress better, I
“protest he would be quite as endurable as
“most of the people I have seen since I came
“into this country; for I really think he does
“not make a great noise, and people who
“live always in the country are apt to get a
“loud bustling way that annoys one dread-
“fully.

And now, whilst they are completing their ride home to dinner, let me finish this Chapter with a short history of the Father of Mrs. Conway, and I will endeavour as nearly as possible to give it in the words in which she in confidence related it to me, her most intimate friend.

“My

“ My mother died,” said Matilda, “ when
“ I was extremely young; so young, that I
“ have no recollection of her person. My
“ grand mother, very much to my father’s
“ satisfaction, as it spared him the expence
“ and trouble of my education, took the
“ care of me till her death, which happened
“ when I was about fourteen years old. She
“ had provided me proper masters in the dif-
“ ferent branches of female education, and
“ her own conduct and precepts were my best
“ instructors in the religion of my ancestors
“ and my country. On the death of this
“ respectable parent, a sister of my mother’s,
“ who had many years before, against the
“ solicitations of all her friends, abjured the
“ Protestant religion, and taken the veil in the
“ convent of ———, wrote to request he
“ would place me under her protection.
“ This proposal my father likewise agreed to,
“ as he thought he should keep me there at
“ less expence than at an English boarding-
“ school, and amidst all his parsimony he
“ had still so much of the pride of a gentle-
“ man, as to wish me to differ from the vul-
“ gar in my mind and manners.

“ Under

“ Under the tuition of my amiable aunt,
“ Sister Agnes, (to whose care I am indebted
“ for the cultivation of those seeds of virtue
“ nature had implanted in my breast, and
“ for calling forth those talents she had be-
“ stowed), I lived till the age of eighteen,
“ when my father recalled me to my native
“ country. As since the death of my mo-
“ ther (the only person of either sex to whom
“ he had ever shewn the smallest attachment)
“ his natural dislike to society had increased,
“ and he now lived wholly in solitude, Lady
“ H—, his sister, offered to introduce me to
“ the world; she had lately become a widow,
“ resided the greatest part of the year in
“ town, and saw an infinity of gay and fashi-
“ onable people. At her house I became ac-
“ quainted with Mr. Conway, who was a
“ frequent and favourite visitor of her Lady-
“ ship, who had for him the highest respect,
“ and thinking she saw in him a similarity of
“ disposition to mine, encouraged *his* atten-
“ tions to *me*, and my partiality to his merits.
“ My father, however, mean while, received
“ proposals of marriage for me, from a gen-
“ tleman of much larger fortune than Mr.
“ Conway’s,

“ Conway’s, and insisted on my renounce-
 “ ing all thoughts of an union with the lat-
 “ ter, protesting that if we married he would
 “ never leave me a single shilling. Lady
 “ H—, who had suffered herself, from the
 “ same cause, inveighed, in the bitterest
 “ terms, against this tyrannical abuse of pa-
 “ ternal power. Conway then said, there
 “ was only one way by which we could evade
 “ its effects, his fortune would be sufficient,
 “ without living to the extent of it, to sur-
 “ nish us in the country with the comforts,
 “ the conveniences, and even some of the
 “ elegancies of life. He exaggerated the
 “ merit of the sacrifice I should make by re-
 “ nouncing a world, of which his partiality
 “ made him fancy I was one of the most bril-
 “ liant ornaments, to domesticate in the
 “ country. For a time the thought of be-
 “ coming a portionless wife to a man whose
 “ ancestors had reduced the family estate to
 “ a bare third of its original value, appeared
 “ to me an act of imprudence and injus-
 “ tice, and made me oppose an overture
 “ which my heart ardently wished accom-
 “ plished; quitting the gay world would, to
 “ me,

“ me, have been but a matter of small im-
“ portance, had a common motive been my
“ inducement for leaving it, but to withdraw
“ from it for the society of Conway, my
“ heart bounded at the thought.

“ The never-ceasing solicitations of Con-
“ way, which were seconded by Lady H—,
“ at length conquered my every scruple.
“ We went soon after our marriage to throw
“ ourselves at the feet of my father, but the
“ moment our names were announced, he
“ sent word, that he did not wish to receive
“ visits from such poor guests. We have
“ not since had courage to repeat our vi-
“ sit.”

C H A P. IV.

TH E adventures of the day served them for conversation at dinner time. Soon after the ladies had withdrawn from table, Needham followed them to the drawing-room. Lady Gaythorne complained of excessive fatigue from the heat of the day, and Mrs. Conway recommended it to her to endeavour to compose herself to sleep for an hour or two : her ladyship said she would take her advice, and ringing for her woman to attend her, retired for that purpose. As soon as she had left the room, Mrs. Conway, who was desirous of knowing how her neighbours, the Williams's were, after their terrible accident, asked Needham and Mrs. Neville if they would accompany her in calling on them.

Needham

Needham and Mrs. Neville expressed their desire of going, and they set out.

A few minutes after their departure, Sir Harry declined taking any more wine, and complained of a violent pain in his head, which he imputed to riding in the sun, during the heat of the day, and begging his friend to excuse him, went into an adjoining apartment, in order to throw himself on a sofa.

Conway went to the drawing-room in expectation of finding the ladies there, and inquiring of a servant where they were, he was told, "gone a walking."

He now looked about for the last new comedy, which he had seen lying in that room before dinner, but not finding it he went to Mrs. Conway's apartment, thinking she might have carried it there; he was disappointed in his search; but returning past Lady Gaythorne's dressing-room, imagining her Ladyship to be gone out, he stepped in to see if she had taken it away. He opened
the

the door, and instantly perceived it lying on the toilet ; he took it up, and stood for a minute looking into it, but turning about to go out of the room, his eye caught, from the looking-glass, the reflection of Lady Gaythorne's figure, lying on the sofa at the bottom of the room ; he turned round, " God bless me ! I beg your Ladyship's pardon, but I really thought you were gone out with the rest of the ladies ; and I came here for this play, to amuse myself in your absence." " Are they gone out ?" said she ; " I did not know it : what have you done with Sir Harry ?"

" He complained of a head-ache, and wished to be alone."

" I was reading a little of that play," said Lady Gaythorne, " this morning, I never saw it acted, and there was one passage I did not rightly understand. If you'll give me leave I'll show it you !"

He brought the book, and whilst she turned over the leaves, sat down on a chair near her,

her, and could not help making her Ladyship, whose form he had never seen appear to greater advantage, the subject of his contemplations. To favour her repose, she had been undressed, and had thrown over her a robe de chambre of the finest chintz, which, being made extremely wide and long, fell in the most graceful folds, and gave that fullness to her figure, which her tall stature required. Her locks, which, by the aid of her hair dresser, appeared extremely luxuriant, hung, according to the fashion of the day, to the bottom of her waist, giving a picturesque air to her whole appearance.

Rousseau, in his "Confessions," tells us, the girls who drew his attention most towards them, were not always the handsomest. "It was rather those who had the most of delicacy and languor in their air and deportment; the softest voices, the whitest hands; who wore the finest linen, and the best fancied colours." The fact is, that an air of luxury, an excess of softness, often aids the empire of the senses more than the most finished beauty, where these are not

K

possessed

possessed in a pre-eminent degree. Female sprightliness and spirit give an idea of something to be overcome—a city in the height of power and glory, not to be reduced but with danger and difficulty. Female inactivity, softness, and languor, remind us of a city which luxury and effeminacy have rendered incapable of defending itself, ready to fall an easy conquest to the first invader. In manners of this last cast, there is nothing that puts us in mind of resistance, and though opposition in many cases serves but to increase the fury of the passions, it is when they have passed far beyond their natural limits; for, in the beginning of their progress, it sometimes gives them a check, which answers the salutary purpose of forcing them back to their proper channel.

Perhaps from a female endowed with the most regular beauty, adorned with every sprightly air that gaily dances in the train of the graces, who added to these the wit and the spirit of Minerva, the feeling, the elegant Matilda would have had little to have dreaded. Amidst the blaze of such charms,
the

the constancy of Conway might have remained unshaken; whilst from Lady Gaythorne, whose understanding was of the meanest order, whose temperament was the coldest, and whose mind was never agitated save by the desire of admiration, she had every thing to fear. Her attention, though proceeding from the most contemptible motive, flattered; because it appeared an effort in favour of a particular object, a triumph over her native indolence.

But to return from this long digression. I left her Ladyship turning over the leaves of the comedy. "I protest," said she, "I beg your pardon, but I cannot find it now." "I have been agreeably employed," returned he, "in marking the effect of that undress: "I never saw you look better in the most studied habit. It proves the truth of the elegant though hackneyed quotation:

"Beauty when unadorn'd 's adorn'd the most."

"Do you really think this dishabille becoming?"

K 2

"Indeed

“ Indeed I think you look elegant !
“ charming ! to a high degree, and that
“ this would be a happy minute for our fair
“ painter to catch the form of her Helen.”

“ Lord, I wish she were here if you are of
“ that opinion ;—and I declare I think your
“ countenance has infinitely more of the
“ proper spirit of Paris, than when we sat in
“ form at Mr. Neville’s ; but you ought to
“ sit here ;—and should lean just so—your
“ head a little more against the back—there,
“ that is just as she placed you.—Now I
“ ought to stand in this attitude,” said she,
leaving the sofa, and placing herself in the
position the painter had chosen, “ as having
“ been led to you by Venus.” The wine
Conway had drank had heated his brain—
there was an alluring naiveté in her manner
that appeared at that moment seducing :
“ Charming,” cried he, “ you enter into the
“ spirit of the scene,” and from personating
a character himself, he really began to feel
it. He involuntarily started from his seat,
and placed her on the sofa.

Lord !

“ Lord ! said she, “ if any one was to
“ see this, they would think us mad, or
“ worse.” “ There are some people” said he,
“ ready to misconstrue every innocent fro-
“ lick.”

“ So they do, but I protest I am always
“ of opinion, if we think no harm, we then
“ do no wrong.”

“ Enchanting simplicity,” cried he, “ I
“ never saw a creature so inspired by the
“ Graces.” “ You do not think so in sin-
“ cerity,” replied she.

“ I do, by the hand of Venus, of which
“ this is the most finished model.” “ You
“ must not kiss my hand :—positively I shall
“ be obliged to turn you out of the room.”

She *said*, “ I must turn you out of the
“ room,” but she *did* not repel the first ad-
vances to familiarity ; and Conway, like the
frogs in the fable, might have exclaimed,
“ this is but amusement to you, to me it is
“ death.” His reason became the slave of

his senses. He forgot what he owed to the best affections of the heart, to honour, and to duty.

Lady Gaythorne saw he was not to be intimidated, but by exposure ; the allurements she had at first practised, were only intended to try the power of her own charms on a heart that thought itself inviolably attached to another object ; whether her Ladyship had approached too near a flame she had fanned to consume another ; or reflected that sacrifices to vanity, or to passion, may be sometimes made by the wedded fair, and without discovery, and in her case thought it would be better to save the parties nearest concerned an infinity of inquietude, and herself the fatigue and trouble of further resistance, by desisting from opposition, I pretend not to determine, but like Herodotus, hold myself bound to relate all I have heard, and the fact is, if she *resisted* she did not *conquer*.

C H A P. V.

THE return of the ladies and Needham obliged them to separate. Conway quitted the house by a back door, and walked, without stopping, till he had got to a good distance from it, his soul torn by a chaos of painful sensations; the momentary illusion of the senses was passed, in every breeze he heard the voice of Matilda breathing the reproaches he felt he merited, and in imagination beheld her wounded and delicate spirit, sinking under the weight of disappointed affection, and painting its sufferings on her mild and dejected aspect. Injured friendship now seemed to roll its awful thunders on his ears; and his quickened fancy imagined its keen indignant glances, which, piercing

as the elementary fires, glared before his sight. Even the playful gambols of the fish, as he crossed the canal by a turf walk, that led to the grove of aged elms, caused him to start, with a sensation of terror he had scarcely ever before experienced on any occasion. He flew to the thickest covert of the grove, but it could not hide from him the sight of his own conduct ; he remained there, in a state almost approaching to despair, till the shades of night began to fall. He returned with a pace the most reverse from that with which he had hasted thither, his tardy steps were long, very long, in conducting him to that habitation, which he had never before approached but with extreme eagerness. He drew near to the back part of the house, whilst there was yet light enough for him to discern through the grated window of the nursery a little head nodding to him, and presently heard two or three soft voices calling out, “ We are going to bed, Papa ; “ good-night.”

Conway, waving his hand, uttered Good-night ;” mentally adding, — “ Peace to your
“ flumbers,

“slumbers, sweet innocents, though sorrow
“and self-reproach imbitter mine.” He
proceeded to the parlour, where he found Sir
Harry alone.

“I have been seeking you all over the
“grounds,” were the first words he uttered
to Conway. The change which took place
in the countenance of the latter during their
utterance may be conceived, for “Guilt
“makes cowards of us all.” It was so strik-
ing, that it could not have escaped the eyes
of Sir Harry, had not the dusky evening
veiled it from his sight.

“A melancholy affair has happened,”
continued Sir Harry; “Mrs. Conway was
“sent for, soon after she came home, to her
“father who had been taken suddenly ill.
“She hastened to his house; but, before she
“had reached it, he had breathed his last.
“She is alone in her own apartment, and re-
“quested you might be sent to her the mo-
“ment you came in.” Conway quitted the
parlour instantly, and went to the chamber
of Matilda. He found her in a melancholy

posture, impatiently waiting his return. Accustomed to confide every thought of her heart to his breast, she looked for the moment of his arrival as the moment of relief, as it would afford her an opportunity of pouring out her sorrows to one whose heart, whose affections, whose manners, rendered him the fittest person in the world to soothe an oppressed spirit. The resentments of a good mind die away, when the objects of them are in a state of suffering ; she knew the feelings of her own heart, and she had been accustomed to judge of the operations of Conway's by her own. She hoped that little reserve which had for a short time hung about him, would entirely vanish, when he knew how much real cause she had for uneasiness and vexation of mind. She had entirely forgiven him, and concluded, that though not intentionall, she must have given him some cause of displeasure, and blamed herself for not having with openness inquired and insisted upon knowing in what she had offended him. She rose on his entrance and came towards him.

“ Oh,

“ Oh, my dear Conway,” said she, if
“ you know how violent a shock I have sus-
“ tained, I am sure you would pity me,
“ even though you did not love me as you
“ were used to love me.”

“ I do know it,” returned he, “ I pity
“ thee from my soul, and I love thee better
“ than ever. Heaven knows, how unwor-
“ thy, how very unworthy I hold myself of
“ the possession of so inestimable a trea-
“ sure.”

“ And does then your heart feel as it used
“ to do for me ? Is there not one atom of
“ coldness in it towards your own Matilda ?
“ And do you know, Conway, my dear
“ Conway, that I am that portionless wife I
“ feared I should be.”

“ I do know it, my best love, and I am
“ not, I swear I am not a jot the less happy
“ on that account.”

“ You

“ You are the best, the most generous of
“ men,” said she, bursting into tears on his
“ neck, “ But I—”

“ Do not weep, do not distress thy sweet
“ mind ; indeed he was not a father to
“ thee, he did not deserve those precious
“ drops.”

“ When I got to his house, said Matilda,
“ he lay without sense or motion—he had
“ been seized with an apoplectic fit, which
“ put an end to his existence, notwithstanding
“ every assistance had been administered
“ under the direction of Dr. J——, whom
“ the servant had sent for on his first seizure.
“ To find him lifeless, and to know that he ex-
“ pired in a state of animosity with those so
“ near to him, and whom he ought to have
“ protected, shocked me more than I can
“ describe ;—I still feel my whole frame
“ chilled by the effects of the awful scene,
“ yet will I never be guilty of the hypocrisy
“ of counterfeiting a grief I do not feel—and
“ which would be an insult to you who have
“ been so unkindly, so unjustly treated by
“ him.

“ him.—But, peace to his memory, he was
“ my father !”

“ Talk no more on the subject, my dear
“ Matilda,—we now know apparently the
“ worst of every thing, respecting our worldly
“ concerns ;—we can live as we have hitherto
“ done, without his assistance.—And have
“ we not been happy ?” His voice failed
him ; he could add no more ; a reflection
shot across his mind, that put him on a rack.
“ Yes,” replied Matilda, “ we have, we
“ have indeed, but we will still be happy.
“ What shall prevent it ? It is not in the
“ power of fortune to decrease or augment
“ our comforts.—You bid me talk no more
“ on the subject ;—but I must unburthen
“ my heart, by relating some particulars to
“ you, disagreeable as they are. When the
“ physician had pronounced him beyond
“ hope of recovery, his servant, and the old
“ man who was his gardener, who were with
“ him when he was taken for death, and
“ who were impatient to know their fortune,
“ told me the bureau in which his will was
“ deposited. I recommended it to be open-
“ ed

“ed immediately, having once heard my
“father say, he should insert in his *will* some
“particulars relative to his funeral. It was
“opened in the presence of Dr. J—, Sir Har-
“ry, and Mrs. Eafil, who had been kind
“enough to go with me. He had appointed
“Dr. J— and the Rev. Mr. Herbert his exe-
“cutors; our names, and those of our chil-
“dren were unmentioned in the will. There
“were a few trifling legacies, among which
“were two, one of twenty, the other of ten
“pounds a-year to his female servant, and
“his gardener. The remainder of his for-
“tune, real and personal estates, bequeath-
“ed to St. Thomas’s Hospital, all his fur-
“niture, pictures, china, plate, &c. &c. to
“be sold and appropriated to the same pur-
“pose.”

“Good God! how provoking,” exclaimed Conway, “not to leave you so much as
“the pictures, not even the three Titians
“you were so fond of—nor the little box of
“antique gems I have so often heard Lady
“H——speak in raptures of.”

“Conway,

“Conway, you astonish me,” said Matilda:
 “you bear all this with amazing philosophy,
 “you seem to feel nothing but as a man of
 “taste.”

“I have so long accustomed myself, Ma-
 “tilda, to expect nothing from that quarter,
 “that I do not feel as if I had lost any
 “thing; therefore there is very little philo-
 “sophy in my acquiescence; though I con-
 “fess I could not help giving a short light to
 “the pictures and the box of gems.”

“Mrs. Eafil has but just left me: I was
 “much indebted to her for her kind atten-
 “tion during the painful scene I had to sus-
 “tain.—Lady Gaythorne paid me the com-
 “pliment of sending to tell me, she would
 “attend me if her company would be agree-
 “able.”

“Did she? Good God!” exclaimed Con-
 way involuntarily, “had she presence of
 “mind enough to make the offer.”

“Oh, yes; but I declined the offer by
 “saying, I feared her Ladyship’s spirits
 “would

“ would be too much overcome by a sick-
“ bed scene ;—and intreated her not to think
“ of going with me.”

The mention of this name filled Conway with the most entire confusion : his reflections on what had passed were renewed, (I speak improperly, for they had not ceased), they became more poignant. He lost himself in a painful reverie. Matilda looked at him for some minutes with extreme concern ; but she imputed his musing to a far different cause. “ Alas !” cried she, “ though you
“ talk it off with spirit, I see you cannot
“ avoid serious reflections on this most mortifying subject. Ah, my poor children !”

“ Indeed I think not of it, Matilda, indeed I do not ; for different ideas occupied my mind at the moment you saw me
“ involved in thought.”

“ But perhaps you think of a late unfortunate misapprehension betwixt us,” said
“ Matilda.

“ I do

"I do not, on my word, I do not.

"You will appear to Sir Harry and Lady G——at supper," said Matilda, "me they will not expect to see."

"I will go to them," returned he, if you think it necessary." But how much happier would he have been not to have seen them at all.

He took her hand, as he bade her adieu, and whilst he pressed it to his lips, which were cold and trembling, his own reflections, her pensive, though resigned countenance, her looks full of tenderness towards him, affected him to an extreme degree; a tear stole down his cheeks, like a drop of wintry rain, almost freezing as it fell. Matilda felt them on her hand.

"Oh, Conway, you deceive me!—you are unhappy. I have made you so, and myself the most wretched woman in the world."

"You

“ You are mistaken, on my honour you
“ are ; I feel not from the cause you ima-
“ gine.”

“ What then has happened to distress
“ you ?” “ Nothing, nothing, let us speak
“ no more on this point ;—your manner has
“ affected me :—I was wrong to let you per-
“ ceive it ;—but believe me the matter you
“ suspect, on my soul, touches me not at
“ all.”

The heart of Conway, wont to confide all its uneasinesses to the faithful and tender breast of Matilda, was doubly pained by having a concealment from her ; he longed to kneel at her feet, to tell her the infatuation he had been under, and to solicit her pardon for the momentary infidelity. But a sense of honour, of generosity towards the partner of his guilt, kept him from revealing the fatal secret. He knew too that the knowledge of it would give a stab to the peace of Matilda, that it was more than probable no time, no future conduct of his would ever be able totally to heal. There

was

was a peculiar, a high-wrought delicacy of sentiment, deeply interwoven in the mind of Matilda.—Love in its most refined and impassioned form, was the idol of her heart, and she had adopted the opinion, ever since she had felt the passion, that a heart which had once known the tender confidence, the fond reciprocations of a *real attachment*, was incapable of change, even for a moment; and that those who deviated from constancy, had never known a real flame, or had mistaken a transient meteor for a fixed star.

He was sensible that when her confidence in him had received the shock of such a discovery, it would be impossible to fix it again, but that like a Pagan emerging from idolatry, she would banish from her presence the false image which had been so long imposed on her for the true God.

These sentiments had once been his own, and he felt that nothing but experience could have confuted them. He still adored the virtues, the graces of Matilda; his remain-
ing

ing hopes of happiness in this life he found still centered in her affection, in the domestic comforts of her society; his every feeling, his every hope then of future peace, of future joy, commanded him to be silent.

C H A P. VI.

THE next morning Sir Harry went out very early to spend the day with a gentleman who lived at a distance. During breakfast Conway's attentions to Matilda were unceasing, but he sometimes looked with a concern, even with a degree of tenderness, on Lady Gaythorne, who he still imagined had for him a particular regard; and there was a gratitude in his nature that would not permit him to see with indifference an object that had sacrificed to give him pleasure, though a transient pleasure and succeeded by so many painful sensations. Lady Gaythorne, only agitated by wounded vanity, could not refrain from glancing on him occasional looks of disapprobation that she was not the sole object of his attention.

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The embarrassment, the irksome situation of Conway's mind, may be conceived, and was quickly discerned by Needham, who had before perceived what was going forward, and made it his business incessantly to remark the behaviour of Conway and Lady Gaythorne ; resolved to make their errors, if possible, turn to his own advantage.

Matilda was less likely at this time than at any other to notice any peculiarity in their manners, her own mind being more than commonly disposed to see every thing in the best view, so soothed was it by perceiving that reserve on the part of Conway which had given her so much uneasiness, entirely worn off.

Whilst they sat chatting in a room in the front of the house, they saw Colonel St. Clare, who had a seat within a few miles of Mr. Conway's, driving his phaeton towards the house.

“ My spirits are so low,” said Mrs. Conway, “ I cannot see any but my own family ;

ly ; will your Ladyship have the goodness
“ to assist the gentlemen in entertaining the
“ Colonel, and excuse my leaving the
“ room ?”

Lady Gaythorne bowed : and Mrs. Conway withdrew.

The Colonel entered in a few minutes, with the gayest air in the world. Having made his bows : “ I hope Mrs. Conway is
“ well,” said he. “ She is somewhat indisposed—a melancholy event has happened
“ in the family, the death of a near relation.” “ I sympathize with her, I am truly concerned ;” replied the Colonel.
“ My God, how charming is the disposition
“ of those feathers in your Ladyship’s hat !
“ in short, I never saw any thing more enchantingly fancied than your whole dress.
“ Is it not, Mr. Needham ; is it not ?”

“ Most admirable,” returned he ;—such
“ a dress needs not the aid of animated, living, glowing beauty, to set it off ; it needs
“ but to be seen in a fashionable assembly on
“ the

“ the body of an automaton to do a world of
“ execution. How many men of fashion
“ would be dying for the lovely insensible ?”

Lady Gaythorne, who did not perceive the sarcastic point in this speech, was delighted with it, and looked with an infinity of complacency on the deliverer and the drawer forth of it.

“ You have made some improvements in
“ this charming spot since I was here I think,
“ Mr. Conway,” said the Colonel.

“ Shall I have the honour of your opinion
“ on of them ?”

“ Is the sun too high,” said Colonel St. Clare, “ to suffer us to have the pleasure of
“ your Ladyship’s company in our walk ?”
“ Oh, no : I think I could venture with an
“ umbrella.” Conway rung the bell, an umbrella was brought ; which the Colonel held over her head as they walked out of the house, Conway and Needham following them.

Alas !

Alas ! Conway, who had suffered so much the evening before, who had formed so many just reflections, and so sincerely wished to keep them, having flattered himself with having made an impression on the heart of Lady Gaythorne, felt irritated at seeing her practise every little art which she had employed to seduce his attentions, on the Colonel ; on whom, though for the moment they had the desired effect, they could make no dangerous impression, serving only to amuse the time as it elapsed.

Why did not this conduct, which opened the eyes of Conway, and shewed him he had been the dupe of his own vanity, teach him a thorough contempt of his own weakness, and the woman who had practised on it ? Must we confess ?—We must, and with regret confess, for truth commands it, that mortification at finding himself deceived, was the strongest sensation of his soul. He could not help expressing it verbally to her Ladyship, when they chanced to be at some little distance from Colonel St. Clare and Needham. “ The Colonel is extremely
L “ happy,

“ happy, Madam, in the power of engrossing so much of your conversation.”

“ Yes,” said she, with more sarcasm than he had believed in her character, “ yes, it is pleasant, I own, to have somebody near one who appears to know one is present.”

“ It relieves me from some anxiety, I assure your Ladyship,” replied he, with an air of pique, “ to find that any one, who takes but a little pains in attempting to please you may succeed. It is most fortunate for both of us : but I confess so sudden a transfer of regard is astonishing.”

“ I wonder you, of all people,” returned she, “ should be surprised ! you who are yourself so subject to sudden changes— but I hate reproaches, they are the most fatiguing things in the world.” So saying, she turned about to join the company. This behaviour, which ought to have increased his contempt, revived the deadened embers of his former flame.

“ This

“ This coldness, this insensibility must be
“ feigned.”

“ Why should you think so,” said she,
“ who have yourself so lately suffered as great
“ a transformation ? Are your powers of
“ charming, do you imagine, more resistless
“ than mine ? Do you think women feel
“ less at being neglected than men ?”

“ But did you really feel,” cried he, “ the
“ neglect you complain of ?”

“ To be sure,” said Lady Gaythorne,
looking down with an air of affected sensibi-
lity ; for she saw there were hopes of bring-
ing him back to her chains, and therefore
began to re-practise some of her former al-
lurements. “ Have I never given you rea-
“ son to believe I should feel your neglect.”
“ Alas ! you have, you have indeed,” said
he, “ given me every proof in the world ;
“ and I was an idiot to believe your little
“ jealous retaliation bespoke indifference.”
At this minute Colonel St. Clare came into
the walk, and they turned from each other ;

just then Needham appeared from behind a thicket, and by a look, though he said not a word, gave her Ladyship, who was a few steps behind Conway, to understand he had overheard their conversation.

She started, and was for some minutes, in spite of her constitutional apathy, greatly confused. He took no farther notice, however, but began a conversation on an indifferent subject, which gave her time to recollect herself.

After some minutes silence, she looked as if by accident on a diamond ring she had on her finger, suddenly exclaiming, " Lord !
" how came I with this Gothick ring on my
" finger ? I protested I would never wear it
" again. My mother, when she gave it me,
" desired I would not alter the setting of it,
" as I believe it had been her great grandfa-
" ther's. For my part I hate the sight of
" it."

" What folly," cried Needham, " to hate
" a thing in itself beautiful, because its ap-
" pearance

“pearance is not to the fashion of the present day !”

“Oh ! I know you doat upon every thing that is antique. Do, for Heaven’s sake take it ; and do me the great favour never to let me see it again ”

“ But a family ring, Madam.”

“ Say no more, say no more, if you would oblige me ; but take the frightful thing out of my sight !”

Needham took the ring, bowed low, and put it in his pocket, telling her “ she was like all the handsome women he had ever seen, full of folly and bad taste.”—Her Ladyship hoped she had secured his silence by her present, and as there was a compliment included in his reproach, she smiled, and called him “ an odd old-fashioned mortal.”

In this Lady Gaythorne did not differ from many women of superior understanding,

ing, who would at any time prefer a compliment to their beauty, before one paid to their wit or accomplishments.

They soon after returned to the house, and St. Clare mounted his phaeton and departed. Evening came ; as it was a fine one, Conway, Lady Gaythorne, and Needham, agreed to take a walk ; Mrs. Conway declined going with them, and, as was her usual custom, went to the nursery, to see and bid adieu to her little ones before they went to rest.

C H A P. VII.

LADY Gaythorne, as they strolled along, observed to Conway, that she had never been across the canal, and asked him if there were any walks cut through the trees she saw on the other side. He told her there were, and that it was his favourite place of walking when he was in a meditative mood.

“O ! then I am sure I shall like it ; take
“me to it ; let me see it.”

He could do no less than conduct her thither. As they crossed the turf walk, she exclaimed, “How came you to take those strange
“caprices into your head about Colonel St.
“Clare ? Could you not perceive, I only
L 4 “meant

“ meant to act for your safety, to take off
“ any suspicion. You understand me—I
“ am sure, for my own part, if your safety
“ was not concerned, I should be regardless
“ of my own.”

This proof, as he deemed it, of the strength of her attachment, again drew the veil over his eyes ; he was again lost to every thing but a voluptuous sensation of gratitude for the warmth of her expressions. With this kind of conversation on her part, with those inflated feelings on his, they walked towards the grove. Mean time, Needham, without their observing him, had taken another road, and having passed through a gate that led into a green lane, he met Sir Harry returning from his visit, who, on seeing Needham, dismounted, and gave his horse to the servant. When the man was got at a distance, “ I am glad to have met you, Sir Harry,” said Needham ; “ I wished much for a private conversation with you, though one
“ of a most disagreeable nature.” Sir Harry was alarmed at this prelude. “ You may
“ proceed,

“proceed, Sir,” replied he, “I believe there
“is no one within hearing.”

Needham then turning his eye on a favourite spaniel of Sir Harry's which was following its master, called the servant back, desiring him to call off the dog, and take him home with him. Sir Harry could not help smiling at this preparation: “Dogs,” said he, “though they may have sometimes
“more acute perceptions of things than many of the human species, have not the organ of speech to communicate them to
“others.”

“You will not wonder at this precaution
“in a few minutes,” returned Needham with a look of solemnity. The servant took the dog with him, and they once more returned into the line. “You are naturally
“alarmed and astonished at so serious a prelude to what I am going to say.”

“I am indeed, Sir, pray proceed.”

Needham then, with great seeming concern, entered on the discovery he had made, related the conversation he had overheard, and the various observations he had made. Notwithstanding what Needham advanced, Sir Harry seemed not to credit what he had heard, but hoped, fondly hoped they had been suspected wrongfully, when, to deprive him of all doubts, Needham produced the ring ; which he most solemnly avowed had been given him as a silent request for him to conceal his observations, and his suspicions of their correspondence. “ Can it be possible that she gave it you ? ” cried Sir Harry.

“ On my soul she did,” replied Needham, “ and for the purpose I have mentioned.”

This solemn asseveration struck him for some minutes totally silent ; at last he gave his feelings words—“ Conway ! what
“ Conway ! ” exclaimed he ; “ the friend
“ the darling friend of my soul ? Can he
“ basely degenerate from himself—and from
“ the

“ the soul of honour, turn the vile seducer
“ of his friend’s wife !—Oh ! truth, where
“ art thou to be found ?” Then, overcome
by a sudden emotion of another kind, he
quickly exclaimed, “ I must have better
“ proofs, Sir, than the bare word of any
“ man, before I suspect that honour I have so
“ long revered, that virtue I have so long
“ loved. Your penetration must procure me
“ ocular proof of what you advance ; I
“ must see something to awaken suspicions,
“ and excite to sedulous watchfulness be-
“ fore I will suspect.”

“ You may possibly see something that
“ may tend to that end, ere it be long, if
“ you follow me,” returned Needham cool-
ly, and with an air of resentment that his
word should be doubted.

“ Where, where ?” said Sir Harry ; “ I
“ would follow you for conviction of their
“ innocence or guilt, to the extremity of the
“ earth.”

“ This

“ This way,” said Needham, leading to the Grove. Before they reach it let us return to Conway and Lady Gaythorne.

Though we have seen that Conway was somewhat intoxicated with what Lady Gaythorne had uttered, with expressions and actions so flattering, he yet was sufficiently himself to shudder at the thought of repeating the criminal intercourse which had once taken place, and he endeavoured to give the conversation a less seductive turn. He scarcely allowed himself to touch her hand during their walk ; notwithstanding, however, this guarded conduct on his part, one of those incidents in the drama of life, which lead to catastrophical denouements, presented him to the sight of Sir Harry, seated by her side, with an air of tenderness and familiarity sufficient to justify the suggestions of Needham. A tuft of grass caught Lady Gaythorne’s foot ; she hurt herself but little, but as her custom was, on every occasion that presented the least pretence to afford excessive alarms, she crawled with the appearance of great difficulty to a seat in the walk. After she had
sat

for a few minutes, she acknowledged the pain in her ankle to be somewhat gone off; but finding she had chafed a little of the skin off one of her hands in the fall, pulled out her pocket book, from whence she produced a piece of court plaister to apply to it. When she had placed it on the wounded part, she held out her hand with an air of softness, and asked Conway to press it on; he did so—with his lips.

Sir Harry, from behind the shade of a tree, first beheld them in this action. The sight operated like a sudden flash of light breaking upon the eyes of one who had been born blind; he could not support it, his very soul sickened, and closing his eyes, he leant for some moments against the tree in a state of total insensibility to every thing around him. Had this gigantic injury been done him by a stranger, rage, which would then have been the *strongest* passion of his soul, might have prompted him to some deed of desperation great as his wrongs against the seducer of his wife, notwithstanding the philosophic mildness which had hitherto distinguished his spirit.

spirit. But the deep wound under which his heart now groaned, had been implanted there by a friend, his own familiar friend, and grief and bitter disappointment filled up the place which revenge would have occupied, had an alien been the aggressor.

As soon as he had recovered speech, "Lead me from the spot," cried he ; "lead me from it—I can no longer endure the sight of objects so baleful to my peace, another view of them would be my death ; —'twould be as shocking to me to meet their eyes, humbled as they must be, as if I had myself been the criminal." But "whither shall I direct my steps?" said he, as he moved from the spot—"for to his house I never can return. Yet I will go," said he, after a pause, "I will go to the house this instant, and order the carriage, and depart : by letter only will I signify to them my knowledge of their infidelity. Will you accompany me, Mr. Needham ? Perhaps if we hasten we may have made our retreat before they return." Tumultuous as were the sensations of Sir Harry, he yet

yet had sufficient command of himself to take a respectful though hasty leave of Mrs. Conway ; to tell her he had received letters from London that day which demanded his immediate appearance there on particular business. He had in truth received letters, though not such as he described ; for on his entering the house his servant brought him several which had arrived by that day's post. He begged Mrs. Conway to tell Lady Gaythorne he would write a few lines to her whilst post horses were got ready at the next town, from whence he would send her back the carriage. He added that Mr. Needham, whose advice might be of great use to him in a present embarrassing predicament, had been obliging enough to offer to accompany him. They both then in a hasty manner bade her adieu, stepped into the carriage and were driven away.

No sooner were they arrived at the place destined for their halting for the purpose before mentioned, than Sir Harry called for materials for writing, and gave vent to the
emotions

emotions of his heart in the following letter to Conway.

“ My departure you are, it is most proba-
“ ble, ere this, acquainted with ; and the re-
“ proaches of your own heart have, I doubt
“ not, been prompt to suggest to you the
“ cause of it. Conway, I yet believe, not-
“ withstanding my full conviction of your
“ criminality in this instance, that though
“ vice may have led your heart astray for a
“ time it will return to its former attach-
“ ments, and though your conduct has plac-
“ ed an irremovable bar between us, my
“ heart bitterly and irrecoverably wounded
“ as it is in the parts occupied by love and
“ friendship, to your domestic feelings yet
“ has respect. Be again happy, if you can
“ be happy (while memory paints to you the
“ dagger you have placed in my breast) in
“ the esteem, the affection of one of the
“ worthiest women in existence ; I will not
“ tear away the bandage from the eyes of
“ one who doats on you, one whose gentle
“ spirit and tender frame could not support the
“ knowledge of your perfidy. I will not
“ plunge

“ plunge the spear into her breast which has
“ so fatally pierced mine. Adieu ! Con-
“ way, adieu ! for the last time. Oh ! God,
“ how fleeting is the happiness of man ! But
“ this morning saw me in imagination blest
“ beyond the lot of mortals in a wife, in a
“ friend ! the evening sees me despoiled of
“ both, sees me the most forlorn, the most
“ wretched of mankind. Oh Conway, why,
“ why have you committed this horrible
“ breach of hospitality of friendship ! Oh
“ my swollen heart——I can add no
“ more.

“ Farewell for ever.”

His letter to Lady Gaythorne breathed the same mild, but wounded spirit ; it concluded with telling her he had sent back the carriage to conduct her wherever she chose, except to either of his houses ; he informed her, that, for the sake of Mrs. Conway's peace, the motives of their separation should be concealed from the world ; that he was going to town to have writings drawn for a separate maintenance for her, in the fixing of which she would not find him wanting in generosity.

C H A P.

C H A P. VIII.

CONWAY, on the receipt of Sir Harry Gaythorne's letter, felt as one who, awaking from a dream, finds that while he had been entertained with fruitless illusions, some great and terrible disaster had befallen him, which, had he continued watchful, would never have happened, but which can never be recalled ; and whose dreadful effects must embitter with endless regret the remainder of his existence.

A thousand times he resolved to throw himself at her feet, to unburthen his heart of this wondrous weight of guilt and remorse ; but the knowledge I have before described him to have of her sentiments withheld him ;
the

the idea of losing for ever the society, the endearing society of Matilda, was the keenest arrow in the quiver of misfortune; whilst that was unshot, he seemed, though miserable at the present moment, to have some latent hope of future peace; but he felt, that whenever that should enter his breast, his death-wound would enter with it. Such were the feelings of Conway on the perusal of Sir Harry's letter. Lady Gaythorne was as much shocked and surprized as her placid nature would admit her to be—but it was not remorse for her fault, nor regret for the sorrow she had brought on the best and tenderest friend any woman had ever possessed. Her distress, if any she felt, arose from the thought that she was no longer mistress of the elegant mansions in town and country, of Sir Harry Gaythorne, and that her expences must be diminished; for though she had seen enough of the generosity of Sir Harry's spirit, to believe he would deal more liberally by her than almost any other human being would do in the same situation; it yet instantly occurred to her, that half her brilliance was tarnished.

The

The first expression which escaped her Ladyship when she saw Conway alone, was, "How could Sir Harry know this, except by the means of that deceitful Needleham?"

"It matters not," replied he; "it is of little consequence how the discovery was made, the fact is not to be denied. See here a letter full of mildness that wounds more than the keenest reproaches; my soul is on the rack." He gave her the letter, and she presented him with that she had received.

Her Ladyship vented her griefs in a few tears, and then her native composure in a great degree returned. She began to look on the most favourable side of the affair; she called to mind that though she should not enjoy all the splendour with which she had been surrounded whilst living with Sir Harry, she yet doubted not but he would enable her to support with propriety of appearance the rank he had given her. And that as her character would not be unveiled, she should

should every where be received with the respect due to the wife of Sir Harry Gaythorne. With thoughts like these she in a good measure consoled herself; and told Conway she would set out the next morning for Dover, from whence she would embark for France, and wait there the execution of Sir Harry's assurances.

Lady Gaythorne having made some plausible excuse to Mrs. Conway, departed the next day, as she had determined, and entered on her destined journey.

C H A P. IX.

AS soon as the carriage had driven from the house, Conway returned to the parlour, where seating himself in a window, he fell into a deep and gloomy reverie. Matilda, who had taken up her work, stole her eyes from it several times, to mark the melancholy attitude in which he sat. As she looked earnestly upon him, her etwée fell from her lap on the ground; the sound of it interrupted his reverie, and he looked up just in time to perceive her eyes had been fixed on him, and to catch a glimpse of a tear which was falling from her cheek.

He rose to present her with what she had let fall; she saw that he had seen her attention

tion to him, and as he gave her the etwee, detained his hand—"My dear Conway," said she, with an air the most tender in the world, "I was once society for you—" "you used to say I made amends to you for the loss of friends and the world. But do not think I mean to reproach you. I would far rather comfort you, if I knew how. It is natural you should feel the loss of a friend, endeared to you long before you ever saw me. I respect your feelings—I enter into them at this moment in the fullest manner."

"Ah! you do not, you cannot—" escaped from his lips, and a sigh accompanied the expression, but recovering himself, he added, leaning his forehead on her hand, "I confess I am not in good spirits."

"I know you are not, my love," said Matilda, "there are but few people who are capable of feeling, (fewer who are fated to feel) the sweets of friendship in their highest degree—and they who are must not expect to find the rose without its thorns—" "The

“ The removal of a friend affects the generality of persons but like the removal of a picture: they look at the chasm a few times with a slight feeling of regret; they perhaps exclaimed, ‘ it was a good piece,’ but the sensation soon fades away; and in a little time they entirely forget, unless reminded of it by some adventitious circumstance that the place was ever occupied.”

“ It is well observed indeed,” said Conway, “ but will you take a walk, Matilda ?” “ I should like it very much,” returned she, “ and we will walk, if you please, as far as the mill, and call on Mrs. Neville ?”

“ She will perhaps return and spend the day with us,” replied he. “ I shall be glad if we can prevail upon her to do so.”

“ Go, get your hat and cloak then,” cried he, “ and we will set out immediately.” Matilda, with a smile of pleasure quitted the room; she was really happier this day than she had been for a long time past, and flattered herself, when that melancholy which
the

the parting with a friend always throws over the feeling mind, had worn off that of Conway, their time would slide on in the same cheerful and tranquil manner in which it was used to glide away.

They went to Mrs. Neville's:—She accompanied them back to Conway-Park to dinner. The solicitude of Matilda to enliven the conversation was unremitting. Conway perceived it, but it rather gave him pain than pleasure, by reminding him how unworthy he had rendered himself of it; and he frequently retired during the day to give vent to feelings which rose to agony.

Mrs. Neville, after dinner, amused Matilda greatly, by sketching her lovely children in a number of picturesque attitudes, whilst their fond mother sat at her needle work. How pleased, how happy, would Conway have been amidst this tranquil, this heart-soothing groupe, had his bosom enjoyed its accustomed serenity. Towards the close of the evening Mrs. Neville left them, and left them somewhat sooner than she wished to

M

have

have done, thinking Mr. Conway was indisposed, from that air of restlessness and dejection which all his endeavours could not disguise, and which was so opposite to his usual deportment.

“ You are ill, Conway,” said Matilda, approaching him the moment Mrs. Neville was gone, “ you are hot and feverish.”

“ I have the head-ach to an intolerable degree.” “ Rest will be the most probable restorative,” said she, “ go to your chamber and try to sleep.—I will come to you, sit by you, and hold your weary head.”

“ Wilt thou ?” returned he.

“ I will, my sweet fellow,” said she, “ I will.” He went to his own room.

When Matilda entered, he had rested his head, racked by sad thoughts, on his pillow. The window nearest him was open, Matilda approached to shut it :—some wandering branches

branches of the rose and jessamine trees that covered the walls, with welcome intrusion, hung into the room,—she gathered some of their fresh and fragrant flowerets, and laid them wet with the dew of the evening on the burning temples, on the parched lips of Conway —With what a mixture of emotions did he press the lovely hand that with such soft and sweet attention administered the balmy, though momentary refreshment !

He begged her to bind his head tight with her handkerchief—she did so ; he closed his eyes with the hope of sleep ; he sighed, that to sleep was not an act of volition. The sweets of forgetfulness were denied him ; at last his wearied frame reposed itself to sleep, but his tortured fancy was still filled with all that had pained it waking, and scenes of horror and wild affright deepened every pang.

The night waned apace. The servants were all gone to rest, but Matilda had not yet undressed. Conway dreamed that he was in the presence of his injured friend. “ Alas !” said he, “ far better had it been

M 2

“ you

“ you had plunged your sword into my
“ breast, and robbed me of an existence
“ which must be for ever miserable ! your
“ attention to my domestic comfort is of no
“ avail—How can I enjoy a respect, an af-
“ fection, I feel I have not deserved.” Then
again, as if answering to something which
had been said, he exclaimed, “ No, she is
“ not here, she went from hence this morn-
“ ing, to Dover—to Dover I believe.”

Matilda turning pale and cold as marble,
during the articulation of these words, in-
voluntarily advanced her ear nearer and
nearer to his pillow, which failed not to drink
in every syllable he uttered. In a moment
the dreadful mystery was unveiled, she now
comprehended the motives for the sudden
departure of her guests. Conway awaked
with the full impression of his dream on his
mind. The attitude, the expression of coun-
tenance of Matilda called to his recollection
the words he had just uttered. The most
excruciating pangs rived his breast, his head
sunk on the pillow. A chillness, nearly re-
sembling that of death surrounded the heart
of

of the dreading Matilda.—“The blow is given,” said she, and crawling to the table with slow and feeble steps, she took up the candle and left the room; she crossed the passage and went into a chamber on the other side of it.—The moon shone not out clear, but sent forth a faint sickly light; Matilda placed the candle in the chimney, and seated herself upon a chair opposite to the window. Extreme grief often wears for a time the appearance of insensibility; Matilda was astonished at her own composure, she seemed incapable of sensation, her heart turned to marble, but when this rigidity of the soul, if I may be allowed the expression, had given way, it melted into tears of anguish. An incessant weeping of several hours at length exhausted her strength, and weighed down her eye lids for a few minutes. But from this short slumber she was awakened by a sudden trampling of feet; awakened to feel that deep, overwhelming, indescribable sickness of the soul, with which sorrow returns after a momentary suspension. It was her little ones she heard, who being brought down to take their accustomed walk

before breakfast, it would have been almost death to her to have seen them in her present state of mind. Seized with horror at the bare idea of their breaking in upon her, she sprung from her seat, and flew with celerity to bolt the door. Ah ! the lacerated, the agonizing heart of the tender Matilda, to bolt the door against, the children of Conway !

C H A P. X.

AS the hour of breakfast approached, she began to collect herself a little more, in order to appear before the servants with somewhat of her accustomed manner; she imagined Conway would breakfast in his own chamber, which gave her more resolution to descend; and was a good deal surprised when bidding the servant inquire where Mr. Conway would breakfast, he answered that his master had walked out early in the morning.

Matilda changed colour—but endeavoured to hide her emotion from the man, by saying—“I thought he would not have been stirring so early this morning, as his head was so bad last night.”

M 4

Matilda,

Matilda, terrified and alarmed, waited impatiently for his coming back, though not with the wish of conversing with him. In an hour he returned; and entered the room in which she sat with an aspect the most melancholy and dejected; the wildness of despair in his eyes, when he turned them upon her—Matilda would have left the room in silence, and have gone immediately to her own, but he detained her.—“Stay, Matilda,” cried he, “stay, for Heaven’s sake; have you nothing, not one word to utter to a wretch who is sick of life; reproaches, the most cutting reproaches, would be better than this horrid silence?—Is there then no hope of reconciliation? Speak to me, in mercy speak to me!”

“Conway,” said Matilda, with the most touching aspect, “I *love* lov’d you, *fondly* loved you,—your interest, the interest of those little beings, whose voices we now hear, must ever be near to my heart.—For *their* sakes, I will still remain on the spot, where I have seen all my happiness on this side the grave perish for ever. I
“shall

“ shall resemble the tree, which though blast-
“ ed itself, serves yet to shelter from keen
“ winds, or parching suns, the tender plants
“ that surround it.”

“ Oh Matilda, Matilda !” cried he, inter-
rupting her, “ You tear up, you rend my
“ very soul !—Oh ! that you could read my
“ heart !—Do not, do not send me from
“ you—believe that I never will, that I
“ could not bear—to be the witness of so
“ cold, so heartless, so changed a scene—If
“ you could pardon, we might yet be hap-
“ py, be blest as ever.”

“ Never, O never !” cried Matilda, “ for
“ us the rose of domestic happiness has long
“ bloomed ;—but it has now shed its last
“ leaves. The mutual hope, the mutual
“ fear, the fond reciprocations of soft and
“ generous affections are no more for us.
“ Alas ! Conway, there is no cement that
“ can unite the broken bands of wedded
“ confidence.”

“ Recall, recall,” cried he, with frantic eagerness, “ those terrible expressions—
“ there is, there must, there shall be found
“ some perfect cement ; let forgiveness close
“ this dreadful chasm.”

“ Impossible ! impossible !” returned Matilda, “ it will not do,—indeed it will not
“ —for I have forgiven you, Conway, indeed I have—I bear you no resentment,
“ not one spark ; but I have a chill aching
“ sickness at my heart ;—it is quite cold, it
“ answers not to your voice as it used to do ;
“ —it does not even melt at your tears—distrust
“ and gloomy suspicion have barred
“ every avenue to it.”

“ Oh ! God of Heaven,” cried he, holding tight his beating brain ; “ what shall become of me ; unsay, unsay those dreadful
“ words.” Matilda moved her head, her hand fell motionless by her side.—She opened the door,—he seized, and would have detained her, but a servant going by at the moment, obliged him to endeavour to hide
his

his feelings, and he suffered Matilda to leave him.

Matilda retired to her own chamber, with a heart laden with despair: she sometimes tried to soften it to the point he wished, that of entire reconciliation, but it would not do. —She was not apt to be severe to mark the failing of others; but this great breach of moral rectitude had shaken her confidence, and though tenderness remained, esteem stood tottering on the brink of annihilation. Alas! she could no longer point him out to herself, to her children, as the model of human perfection. She felt all that human nature, disappointed of its highest delight, knows to feel. Her spirits were sunken to the most gloomy state of dejection.

C H A P. XL

MATILDA passed the succeeding day in a state of indifference to every thing around her, except the object which had caused this mighty revolution in her soul. She felt that weariness of life, that dreadful chasm in the heart, which only a disappointment in its tenderest affections can inspire. The hours of Conway were spent in the most dreadful agitations one can conceive. Matilda endeavoured, as she could not give him consolation, to avoid seeing him, except when the duties of her family obliged her to quit her own apartment, and when night came, and she retired for the last time, she drew the bolt which secured to her without interruption,

tion, the solitary indulgence of her mournful reflections. The third morning arrived since the painful discovery : Matilda descended in the same frame of mind she had departed to retirement, but with additional paleness, and sadness of aspect. Conway, wrung to the soul, rose when she entered, took her hand, and led her to her seat, she looked upon him with an air of perfect meekness, she waved her head with that hopeless expression, which is of all others the most heart-rending.

The heart of Conway was swollen with agony—he turned away, he walked with a hasty pace to the other end of the room ; he leaned against the window whilst the big drops gushed from his eyes.

“ Oh ! Matilda,” he exclaimed, “ why
“ are you so inflexible ?—Why, may we not
“ try to regain that happy state we once
“ possessed ?”

“ Do not speak of it, do not speak of it,”
said Matilda with a low, quick, and agitated

ted voice, " it can never be regained.—It
" was too pure, too unmixed a felicity to en-
" dure—'tis gone !—*That* was the Summer
" of our fortunes, Conway ! their chilling
" winter is arrived, and its keen blasts have
" bowed me to the earth.—Happiness is no
" more for me."

A servant came into the room, Conway assumed a momentary composure, he went to the breakfast table, he moistened his parched lips with the tea she had poured for him :—he took up something to eat ; but the moment the servant left the room he laid it down untouched, he snatched up his hat and wandered wildly into the garden.

This day passed in the same gloomy manner the preceding one had done. " Sad
" hours seem long," that of retirement at last arrived, Matilda rose to withdraw. Conway, who had sat silent for some time indulging the despairing ideas her conduct inspired, now sprung distractedly from his seat, " And
" must I," cried he, " and must I pass
" another tedious night alone—a prey to
" gloomy

“ gloomy reflections and bitter self reproach :
“ Oh ! Matilda, my brain is convulsed with
“ pain—I shiver with horror—your inflexi-
“ bility will kill me ;—this dreadful state,
“ by Heaven, I cannot, cannot bear—
“ Oh ! sooth me, Matilda, as you were used
“ to do ; forgive me ; tell me that you for-
“ give me.”

“ I do forgive you, Conway, yes, on my
“ soul, I do forgive you, but I cannot make
“ professions of fondness ; do not ask me for
“ them ; for how valueless would they be,
“ whether made by words or actions, if they
“ came not from the heart : how different !
“ but I will not dwell on the idea of what
“ has been.—Conway, I confess I do not
“ feel for you what I once did. It is certain,
“ I am greatly changed, more than I believe
“ you imagine, or I could have conceived
“ possible—indeed I am, and is it not best,
“ then, and is it not much best, then, that
“ we should henceforth live together but as
“ common friends ? for to us who have
“ known every tender sensation of which
“ the heart is capable, what can the cold
“ caresses

“ carcases of reduced affection bring but
“ painful and bitter recollections ?”

“ Oh ! God of Heaven !” he exclaimed,
“ is this, Matilda, is this the only consolati-
“ on you leave with me ? What shall be-
“ come of me ? You drive me to the last
“ despair. But I have now lost all hope ;—
“ I see that you hate me, and I will no more
“ trouble you with the sufferings of such a
“ wretch as I am—be they what they may.”
He now let go her hand, and threw him-
self on a chair, his head supported by his
hands, which rested on his knees. Matilda
seized the opportunity of hastening out of
the room.

C H A P. XII.

MATILDA had not been in the breakfast parlour many minutes the next morning before a woman servant brought her a letter directed to her by the hand of Conway.

“ My master, madam, desired me to give
“ you this ; as soon as you were stirring—
“ he forgot something I believe he meant to
“ have said to you last night ; and would
“ not have you disturbed so early.”

With difficulty Matilda kept herself from uttering an exclamation of surprise, the moment the servant was gone she broke open the letter and read it.

“ It

“ It informed her in language the most touching, that unable to bear the change which his own conduct had occasioned, he had quitted his once happy dwelling, designing to go to some retired part of France, there to live in solitude and obscurity, till time should have enabled him to bear with more patience the idea of living with the woman he adored on the terms of a common friend ; or rendered her less inexorable to his ardent prayers for pardon and reconciliation, both of which he despaired of. That he had left her in the full possession of every thing he had, and should only draw from time to time for such sums as were necessary for a retired life ; that he should send the servant back with his horse the moment he had stepped into a post-chaise.”

It would be impossible to describe with accuracy the feelings of Matilda on reading this letter—she stood for some minutes, as if petrified. Horror seized her, she felt a dread, lest despair should drive him to some act of desperation ; she almost wished she had endeavoured

deavoured to have concealed her feelings; she even thought of sending a messenger to recall him, but then her former sensations returned.

“But oh!” she cried, “to what do I recall him? to nothing but certain misery, for we can never, never again be happy.” Her grief at this moment was the most absolute that can be conceived. She stood in the place where she had first opened the letter, fixed and rooted to the spot; her eyes noticed not a single object that surrounded her, till the sound of her children’s voices, who were returning from their morning’s walk, struck her ear; they saw her from the parlour window and would make their way to her.

“My dear Mama,” said the eldest, we met Papa as we were going a walking, and he got off his horse, and kissed us all, and took leave; and we cried to go with him, and I think Papa cried to leave us, too, for his eyes were red, Mama, and I felt him wet my cheek.”

What

What were the feelings of the poor Matilda ? She snatched up the child, she hid her emotions in his little bosom, which she bedewed with heart-wrung tears.

“ Don’t cry, Mama,” said the child,
“ don’t cry, Mama ; see Charlotte and I
“ don’t cry any more : Papa will soon come
“ back ; he never stays away long you
“ know.”

“ Ah no,” cried Matilda, “ nor he, nor
“ happiness, nor peace, will ever revisit this
“ once joyous, but now desolate dwelling.
“ Go, my little loves,” “ added she, after
giving vent to her fast flowing tears, “ go
“ and get your breakfasts, I will see you
“ again afterwards : I am not well now and
you disturb me.” She kissed them and sent
them away.

The man returned in a few hours ; Matilda, after some time, recollected Conway’s desire at the bottom of the note, that his clothes might be sent after him to an hotel in London, the name of which he mentioned.

ed. She summoned with difficulty resolution enough to enter the room, which she had never been in for a single moment since the fatal night that her peace had received the horrid stab that now caused all her pain; every object she beheld made the deep wound bleed afresh, she opened the drawers to take out what things of his she had under her care.

She found herself unable to proceed several times, a secret horror unnerved her hands; she let them slip from it more than once, and had resolved to lock the drawers, and to write to entreat him to return. But the same feelings which had prompted her conduct the succeeding days instantly re-assumed their empire in her breast, and impelled her to continue the painful office he had requested her to perform: as she was leaving the room, on passing the bed she cast her eyes on her watch which hung on one side of it, and had remained there ever since the night which had seen her happiness fade away,

“Like the baseless fabrick of a vision.”

It

It is strange that the suddenly beholding again objects the most trivial, which we saw at the moment a great calamity befel us, shall have power to give a keener edge to griefs which have near left the heart; and recall the features of our affliction (if I may be allowed the expression,) with greater force to the mind. But it is so.—Matilda felt the truth of this in looking upon her watch, which had never been wound up since that melancholy period. How much is the soul at all times affected by sensible objects! “Oh,” she exclaimed frequently, “that I “too could then have lost the power of “marking the fleeting hours! what pangs “should I have escaped, what years of melancholy! but I will not murmur, why “should I expect a longer term of earthly happiness than others? What am I “that I should not experience the same “changes from the highest possible felicity to the deepest pitch of disappointment “and woe to which others are subjected? “I will be resigned, and wait the hour of “release with christian fortitude.” She said, and burst into a fresh flood of tears that shook her frame with agony.

C H A P. XIII.

IT was necessary Conway should go to London, before he left the kingdom, respecting some business which concerned the interest of his family. He went on his arrival to an hotel near St. James's Street. It was late in the evening when he got into town, but as soon as he had breakfasted the next morning, he walked out to call upon the parties with whom he had business to transact. He walked through the streets with a dead and gloomy weight upon his spirits; his blood crept silently through his veins; except when glancing his eyes around they caught some form or countenance that in any degree resembled Matilda; and however absurd and groundless the idea, an irresistible impulse led him several times to stand

stand still to gaze on some particular object, thinking for the moment he saw her at a distance.

At length his eyes, tired, and aching with continually regarding objects with a perception so minute, rested on a spectacle so shocking to his feelings as almost to deprive him, for some moments, of the faculty of sight. In crossing one of the squares he saw Sir Harry Gaythorne and Needham step out of the carriage of the former, and go into a house where Conway and his friend often used to visit when they were in town together. The sight of the man who had acted so treacherous a part apparently in a habit of close intimacy with his friend ; an intimacy brought on by that dreadful event which had severed Conway and Sir Harry for ever, filled the former with the most complicated and violent emotions ; madness almost came upon him ; he uttered an execration though alone ; and entering the first coffee house he came to, called for a pen and ink, and in the bitterness of his wounded spirit wrote a challenge

enge to Needham, which he immediately sent to the coffee house he knew he frequented; a challenge, dictated perhaps more by feelings of despair and weariness of life, had they been strictly analized, than by the desire of revenge.

C H A P. XIV.

THE sad Matilda, left to the entire indulgence of her gloomy musings, wandered like a troubled ghost about the lonely spot, which had, till this period, appeared to her an earthly paradise; for the taste of Conway had directed every shrub and flower to rise; fashioned every shady walk, each cool sequestered grot and gay alcove!

After returning from one of those melancholy rambles, on the second day of Conway's departure, she seated herself in the parlour, leaning on her arm full of reflection, memory recalled, with torturing minuteness, a thousand lovely scenes of innocent pleasure. In the first transports of her affliction on the
discovery

discovery of Conway's infidelity, her imagination had persuaded her judgment there was something meritorious in not poorly endeavouring to endure a mediocrity of existence, after having experienced every animated, every delightful sensation which love, innocence, and the intercourse of intelligent minds, unallayed by worldly cares, can bestow. But now that she was left entirely alone, and a calm melancholy had succeeded to those racking emotions her grief-swollen heart had at first sustained, she began to look with a more philosophic eye on her situation: she became in some degree more reconciled to the idea of putting a force on her inclinations, and endeavouring to make the life of Conway as happy as possible, though the recollection of former confidence, of former entire faith, might sometimes draw forth a pang, a sigh, a starting tear of tender sorrow from her breast.

That person must have observed very little of human nature, who thinks the historian of Matilda records an unnatural fiction, when he describes the change which took place in

her soul. He must have remaked but little on the operations of the heart, who has not observed in what strongly contrasted colours the same actions and circumstances appear to the mind's eye" at different periods, as thought and reflection vary their positions.

Matilda knew from the note he left for her, that Conway meant to stay in London a few days before he left the kingdom ; therefore relied that a letter would find him still there.—After some time she brought herself to resolve to write to solicit his return ; she took up a pen and wrote instantly. When she had sent her letter to the post, her mind became as it were new made ; her breast was no longer agitated by painful and turbulent emotions, she was not chearful, but she was tranquil. Her soul experienced the dead calm which precedes a tempest. In this state of mind she passed the remainder of the day. In the evening her little ones were brought to her, to bid her adieu for the night ; and to receive their parting kiss.

“Mama,”

“Mama,” said the eldest boy, as she took him in her arms, “Mama, when will Papa come back?—I think it’s a long time that he has been gone. When he went away once before, Mama, you used to make us kiss Papa’s picture every night; shall we kiss it now?”

“Yes, my love,” said Matilda, almost choked with tears, and quitting the room. She went up stairs; she took a miniature of Conway from a drawer, for the first time since his departure; she kissed it many times; she pressed it wet with tears to her bosom.—“Oh my poor Conway,” exclaimed she, “I had indeed a hard heart to suffer thee to abandon thy home, the country; to give thee up after years of tenderness and truth, for one fault. All righteous Heaven! forgives a thousand repeated trespasses in his weak creatures, and suffers them to live without the heavy weight of his displeasure incessantly preying on their hearts; but I, frail mortal, how have I acted?”—She knelt down, she prayed with the most ardent devotion for a few

N 3

minutes,

minutes, intreating to be directed to that mode of conduct which should eventually be productive of peace and comfort to the wounded spirit of Conway !——She arose with a mind more serene, and descended to her children with the picture in her hand.

C H A P. XV.

THE next afternoon Matilda having tired herself with alternately reading and working at her needle, wandered into the shrubbery—she reached the spot where had once occurred a little incident which we recorded in the first volume of this work. The recollection of an incident which did so much honour to the heart and the principles of Conway, gave a more than common softness to the mind of Matilda, and disposed it for more pleasing contemplations than it had long felt itself inclined to indulge; she seated herself on a sloping turf; and soothed by the serenity of the situation, the chant of birds, and the sweet incense that breathed around her, she fell into a deep reverie.

N 4

Whilst

Whilst thus musing, a gentle slumber closed her eyes, and fancy free and unconfined painted every object in its favourite colours. Matilda beheld in imagination Conway return; she seemed in a few short moments to pass whole years of sweet and tranquil delight—she felt renewed all those soft and blooming transports, which had danced round her heart when she first visited the mansion of Conway.

The sound of feet awaked her from this soothing dream, and the fairy vision instantly vanished from her mind. The moment she awoke, the impression of past sorrows rushed upon her startled imagination. These feelings were prophetic! A servant approached her with a letter. She took it from him—she read it. Conway was ill, and wrote with an unsteady hand to intreat to see her. A dying faintness, a sudden heat overspread her frame. She with difficulty, by the aid of salts, kept herself from fainting. At last she recovered herself sufficiently to exclaim—“I will go.” She crawled with slow steps, and faint, to the house; gave orders
for

for a few necessaries to be packed up ; sent a servant to order a post-chaise, and prepared herself for her immediate departure.

She took a hasty, but affecting leave of her children. The man quickly returned, and prepared himself to attend her to town. The chaise came with all possible expedition to the door. Matilda and her own maid stepped into it, followed by the tearful eyes of the women servants who were left behind, and who had lived with her ever since her first settling in the country, and had both for her and their master nearly the affection of dutiful children.

Fearless of danger, Matilda travelled the whole night, and arrived in town about the middle of the next day.

At the entrance of St. James's-street she saw Sir Harry Gaythorne on foot, their eyes met, he bowed—he ordered the driver to stop. Sir Harry approached the side of the chaise with a look of deep concern.

"Your friend is ill," said she, with extreme agitation, "dangerously ill."

"I hope he is not, Madam, so bad as you imagine—I am told," said he, with the hope of supporting her spirits, "that his wounds are not dangerous."

"His wounds !" exclaimed Matilda with extreme precipitation and a look of horror, "his wounds ! God of Heaven ! What wounds ?"

"Alas !" cried Sir Harry, "What have I unguardedly done ? You are not apprized then—."

"Tell me the worst at once," cried she, interrupting him, "with you has he fought—in mercy tell me ? Relieve me from this horrid suspense ?"

"With Needham, with Needham," returned Sir Harry : "Heavens ! that I should have been the messenger of such information :

"inform me, but you must have known
"it, you will know every thing too soon."

Matilda made no answer, she shed not a tear, she lifted her eyes to Heaven with an eye of anguish so tempered by resignation, that Sir Harry looked upon her at the moment above mortality; he could not longer endure the touching sight. He pressed her hand as it rested on the door of the chaise, "Heaven support you," he breathed out, and hastily retired.

"Go on," said she to the driver, the moment Sir Harry had left them, without the least agitation in her voice. And folding her arms, she sat with the fixed look of hopeless, yet resigned grief.

When she arrived at the inn, excessive fatigue, joined to the new shock she had received, had so exhausted her strength, that she was obliged to be supported into the house by her woman, who weeping, intreated her to take something before she ventured to see her master: "No," said she, "lead me to
"him

"him this instant; perhaps even now, Jam
 "arrived too late to receive his last breath,
 "to close his dying eyes." Here her voice
 failed her—she followed in silence the ser-
 vant who waited to conduct her to the apart-
 ment where Conway was. They had gain-
 ed the door—Matilda turned about, "You
 "see, Jane," said she, "it is too true what
 "my fears presaged, there is no hope;—
 "no one since we have entered the house
 "has even attempted to inspire me with
 "it; but it is well that I know the worst:—
 "for what, in such a case, would fallacies
 "avail—they could not extend beyond the
 "grave."

Jane could only reply by a gush of sympa-
 thising tears.

The door was opened—"Now leave me,"
 said she. They retired—she approached
 with trembling steps to the foot of the bed—
 her whole frame shook—she supported herself
 by one of the posts; Conway with a faint
 hand put back the curtains:—he saw her—
 and with strength given him by emotion,
 raised

raised himself up.—Matilda flew to him ;—she laid his dying head and pale cheek on her bosom—she bedewed it with cold and bitter tears.

“ Oh ! Matilda,” cried he, “ thou art too good, too kind, too indulgent : I have not deserved——alas ! at what an hour thou comest. Dost thou know ? Thou must, thou wilt know it. Matilda, I am dying, my doom is fixed ; but thou comest, as thou hast always appeared to me, like a benignant angel—thou comest with pardon, with fond forgiveness, and I shall die content, and hope for future mercy.”

“ Oh ! speak not so, my life, my all,” cried Matilda ; “ thou yet wilt live to soothe, to revive my drooping heart.”

“ No, it cannot be.—Matilda, I have requested to be told my fate ; I know of a certainty I have not many hours to exist with thee here—but oh ! I trust in that mercy which is infinite, and hope to meet thee in another state.”

“ Oh !”

“ Oh !” exclaimed Matilda, “ I have
“ killed thee, barbarous as I was. Oh, Con-
“ way, how hard and unrelenting was my
“ heart ; I drove thee from thy home to
“ madness, to do a deed of desperation
“ which has murdered thee : can’st thou
“ forgive me ?”

“ Forgive thee !” cried he drawing her
to his breast with all the little strength he yet
possessed “ Had’st thou done any thing to
“ need forgiveness : the moments, hours, the
“ years of bliss we have passed together
“ might cancel every fault ; but I, Matil-
“ da, I am the wretch to need forgiveness :
“ my follies have brought this dreadful
“ wreck of happiness upon us ; we have been
“ happy ! yes ! we have ! witness ye smil-
“ ing hours, ye moments winged with in-
“ nocent delight—oh thoughts which stab
“ the heart, while recollection warms it.
“ Were we not happy, Matilda ? Were
“ we not ? But what avails it now ? Par-
“ don, and peace, are now the only com-
“ forts I can know.”

“ Yes,

" Yes, Conway," yes, cried Matilda with
 the tone of bitter anguish, " we have indeed
 " been happy;—I believe, firmly believe we
 " have known as much of happiness as mor-
 " tals ever know, but it was all crowded into
 " a few short years:—'twas so interrupted till
 " it intirely vanished, and the sad tempest,
 " which at length tore it from us, came so
 " suddenly, so unlooked for, that its mighty
 " devastations appear with tenfold horror.
 " Sad, comfortless, forlorn, despairing will
 " thy fond Matilda wander through the
 " world without her guide, her kind, indul-
 " gent, generous guide; all, all, that her
 " soul rested on for this world's comfort for
 " ever, ever flown."

" Alas!" said Conway with a faint voice,
 and growing weaker and weaker every mo-
 ment he spoke, " *thou* wilt be supported
 " through every trial: the consciousness of
 " thy own undeviating rectitude will support
 " thee. For me, who have embittered by
 " one fatal error my whole existence, were
 " it to be extended to a long period for me,
 " there is no hope of peace but in the tomb.

"—My

“ — My friend, my injured, noble, unsus-
“ pecting, generous friend.”

“ Alas ! I have not that sweet consolation
“ you speak of ” returned Matilda, “ I
“ have it not, Conway. I have been to *thee*
“ cruel, hard, and unforgiving. I had re-
“ posed too much on what this world of pas-
“ sage had to give. I had not prepared my-
“ self to submit to the will of Heaven,
“ though it should snatch from me the best
“ blessings it had lent. I did not make suf-
“ ficient allowance for the failings of huma-
“ nity. I did not reflect till too late that all-
“ wise Providence sometimes permits the
“ best, the most perfect of its creatures to
“ fall into deep and unlooked-for errors, to
“ shew us that even the best disposed by na-
“ ture, must never, for a single moment,
“ slacken the reins of self controul. The
“ good man who falls into vice, resembles as
“ often the traveller, who slipping from a
“ precipice, is in a moment dashed to the
“ bottom, as the one who almost impercep-
“ tibly rolls down a soft and gentle declivi-
“ ty.”

“ Oh !

“ Oh ! thou,” cried Conway, “ the best,
 “ the kindest of thy sex, thou wert ever just
 “ and good, far, far beyond what I deserved
 “ to possess — Wilt thou not, Matilda, be
 “ comforted ? Wilt thou not strive to live
 “ when I am no more ? Wilt thou not live,
 “ Matilda, for our children ? Do not tell
 “ them my sad story ; I have still so much of
 “ worldly weakness left, I would not have
 “ them hate my memory ;—dear innocents !
 “ what a sad and fatal parting was our last—
 “ Matilda, they still twine about my heart, for
 “ they are thine. Wilt thou not strive to
 “ live for Conway’s children ? ’tis the last re-
 “ quest he makes thee : Wilt thou not pro-
 “ mise him the last request ?

“ Oh ! thou art faint indeed,” said she,
 “ but not in eloquence ; I *will* endeavour to
 “ sustain the hard, hard load of life—I will,
 “ for Conway’s children, I will preserve the
 “ little health misery may yet have left me.
 “ Oh ! may they never know the fond un-
 “ utterable bliss of real love, or knowing,
 “ never feel its keen, its drear reverse.”

“ Thou

“Thou dost then promise?” cried Conway with a faint and dying voice.

“I do, I do,” exclaimed Matilda, supporting his sinking head with her arm. “Oh ! thou art dying;—Conway, my life, my love ! speak to me ? Alas ! alas ! he will speak no more.”

The piercing tones of her voice brought the nurse and Mrs. Conway’s woman, who attended in an adjoining chamber, to her assistance. Conway had fainted. They believed that he had expired, and would have persuaded Matilda to have left the room ;—but she would not leave him, she still held his head, and pressed his cold cheek with his trembling lips. They used every means to recall him to life, Matilda persisting that he was not dead.

Just then a gentle rapping was heard at the door. It was the man servant, who announced to the nurse that Sir Harry Gaythorne was below, and asked if he might be admitted. They inquired if Mrs. Conway chose

chose to see him. "Let him," said Matilda, "be told the situation of his friend! and let him act as his own feelings suggest; I am alike indifferent to every thing."

Conway at length shewed symptoms of returning life; he opened his eyes; he fixed them on Matilda. He moved his lips, but he uttered not an articulate sound; she regarded his countenance with a look of fixed and piercing inquiry, hoping there to find expressed, what his tongue could not pronounce. But the dull vacant eye spoke not; and the movement of his features denoted nothing but bodily pain. Oh bitter sight! the most horrible she yet had seen.

Sir Harry Gaythorne just now came in, he approached the sad spectacle; he uttered an exclamation of horror. He threw himself beside the bed; holding the dying hand of his friend. A ray of intelligence once more illumined the eyes of Conway; he regarded Matilda and Sir Harry with a look of tenderness; he appeared to know them. They looked upon each other with the glances of self-

self-flattering hope; the breath had issued from their lips, they were about to say, "He will again be sensible to our cares." But the momentary glimmering of reason disappeared before they could form any articulate sound; and the same dull vacant gloom again overspread his once animated aspect. The wretched Matilda clung closer and closer to his insensible form. The agonies of death came strong upon him. They at last forced her from him, and carried her almost by violence into another apartment.

Conway, after some hours of extreme suffering, expired that night.

Matilda would not quit the house, till the remains of her beloved Conway were removed from it. She took a last view, before the body was conveyed away, of that loved face which she had so often seen, whilst he gazed on her countenance, animated by the serene smile of tranquil satisfaction, or the vivid glances of delighted admiration; and when she was at length compelled to withdraw her eyes from this still dear object, the sole wish of her soul was, that they might close for ever.

C H A P.

C H A P. XV.

MATILDA, given up to the deepest, the most entire grief, returned into the country. That moment when she came within sight of her own dwelling, her woman who was in the carriage with her, believed would have been her last. She cried, in a voice that thrilled the soul with horror, “He passed those gates for the last time, urged by my unrelenting conduct. I banished him from his home, *for ever* banished him.”

She fainted before she reached the house, and was lifted out of the carriage and carried lifeless into it. She at length recovered sense and motion, but several days relapsed before she could bear the sight of her children ;

dren ; she suffered them not to know she was returned, dreading the earnest, though fond inquiries they would mak after their lost parent. She shut herself up in her own room. She eat nothing but what in pity to the intreaties of her weeping domestics, she forced herself to take ; her time passing, sometimes in the midst of bitter mournings, sometimes of violent bursts of grief, or earnest and solemn supplications to the Almighty for strength to enable her to endure with fortitude and resignation his all-wise, though hard decrees.

Religion at length worked its usual effects on a mind enlightened by strong sense, and supported by just principles ; it softened, though it could never remove her griefs, and she bore without murmuring a loss she could not but lament every hour she was destined to sojourn in this vale of woe.

The lessons of allowing for the imperfections of others ; of guarding against the first tendencies to a deviation from rectitude, and preparing to submit with resignation to the
disposals

disposals of infinite Wisdom, were daily inculcated to her children with sedulous attention and fond anxiety. Sir Harry Gaythorne intreated to share in the cares attending the education of her children; he took the direction of her son's education, and the care of his future fortunes entirely upon himself. The youth has done honour to his family, and distinguished himself in the line of military glory. Her daughter grew up like herself, sensible, elegant, tender and affectionate. Their respect for their mother rose almost to adoration. She was indeed, when I saw her seven years after the death of Conway, the most interesting object grief had ever made. I beheld her in the midst of her children, the first view I caught of her countenance gave me to see the furrows which severe suffering and frequent weeping had worn in a face, on which time had left no other traces of his flight.

She joined, at times, with a soft and playful vivacity, in the cheerful conversation of the young people, who surrounded her; but this was momentary, I perceived the quick transitions

transitions which frequently took place. Often before the smile had vanished a sudden recollection would draw forth the starting tear, which was quickly suppressed, but which never failed to call a sympathetic drop into the eye of sensibility, that never tired of gazing on this lovely, this edifying woman. One was often distressed how to conceal from her the sensations she inspired, —but one needed not to have given it a thought; she was on these occasions too much absorbed in the sad reflections of the moment, to observe what passed around her.

T H E E N D.



